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THE RPGA MAGAZINE
ISSUE 145 VOLUME 20 NUMBER 6 DEC. 2000/JAN. 2001
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What's Going On

THE FRIGHT AT TRISTOR

This year's free DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® member-exclusive adventure, *The Fright at Tristor*, is in the mail and should arrive soon. Written by member Keith Polster, *Fright* sets the players on the trail of a bizarre animal mutilator in the religiously intolerant Theocracy of the Pale, in the WORLD OF GREYHAWK® campaign setting. Best of all, this year's adventure can be played in the comfort of your own home as an official part of the Network's LIVING GREYHAWK® campaign. Look to the *Fright at Tristor* and the next issue of the *LIVING GREYHAWK™ Journal* for more details!

MEMBERSHIP DUES TO RISE

This is the kind of announcement every association director despises. On the other hand, I've been impressed by the number of members who show no surprise at the suggestion, and there even have been a few who have asked why it hasn't yet happened. To get to the point, the time has come to raise the cost of RPGA membership dues to $30 US per year for our United States, Australiam, Continental European, and UK members (three-year rate: $75 US). The membership rates in Canada, Mexico, and the APAC region outside Australia will be $35 USD (three-year rate $90 USD); outside those areas, the cost will be $50 USD (three-year rate $125 USD). The higher prices in outlying regions account for the increased cost of mailing our periodicals to you.
The membership fee will be converted to local currencies when it is charged.

The new rate will take effect March 5th, following *Conception* in the UK (March 2-4). That, of course, means you may renew at the old rate until those dates. Outside North America and the UK, the new rates take effect on March 1.

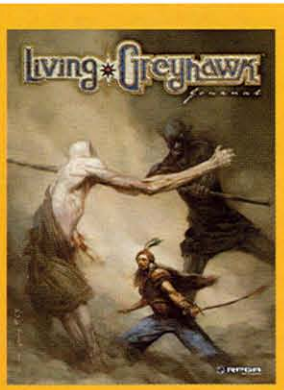
It's been about seven years since we last raised the cost of membership dues, and I'm sure you all realize that everything has grown much more expensive in the meantime. Many of you are also aware that Wizards of the Coast reduced its budgetary commitment to us this year, which has forced us to make some hard choices about Network support, including this one. On the upside, we've added two new LIVING™ campaigns in the last year (LIVING GREYHAWK and LIVING FORCE™), introduced the *LIVING GREYHAWK Journal*, and doubled the size of *Polyhedron* while going to full color. We're also working toward much greater Internet functionality (and more online features, too!), making the RPGA and its services more accessible worldwide.

My friends, please understand that the RPGA does not, and never has, operated at a profit. To the contrary, the costs of running the Network exceed the revenues from membership dues by about 100%. Wizards of the Coast expects to make up for that loss through sales of its products over the long run, but it also believes that sponsoring the services of the RPGA is intrinsically important and good. We on the RPGA staff simply love gaming, and we're in this business for one reason: the members. This rise in the cost of membership dues will not make the RPGA profitable either, but it will allow us to continue to stock the tournament library, organize big conventions like the GEN CON® game fair and publish great magazines like *Polyhedron* and the *LIVING GREYHAWK Journal*. As I alluded to above, I've heard from plenty of members who think a rise in dues is reasonable, and I hope you feel the same way. Thanks for understanding, and may the games continue!

DAVID WISE
RPGA WORLDWIDE MANAGER
wiseguy@wizards.com

SCENARIO ORDERING FEES

Those of you who frequent our Web site may have already noticed a significant change in the way we send out scenarios to conventions and game days. As of the first of the year, event coordinators will be charged



NEXT MONTH: LIVING GREYHAWK JOURNAL #3

The LIVING GREYHAWK campaign goes god-crazy with the third issue of our brand new magazine! Learn the secrets of Oerth's Hero-deities, including Kyuss, master of corruption, and Kelanen, the determined Lord of Swords. Get the goods on all the gods of the Flanaess with our comprehensive list of ready-to-play deities, including domains, favored weapons, and more.

Our look at the City of Greyhawk continues with an eye toward the learned streets of Clerkburg, where sages and students hold dark secrets and dangerous prophecies.

All this plus four critters from the pen of the Fiend-Sage, News from Around the Flanaess, and more!

$10 US per scenario title ordered. For this fee, organizers receive the scenarios and the right to run them for points on the specified dates, plus scoring materials and prize certificates for all tables ordered.

Unfortunately, we are no longer able to provide product support to conventions, so if you're looking for a way to reward good players and game masters, our prize certificates are probably the best bet.

Why the change from free scenarios for all? Over the past year, we've seen a sharp increase in frequent ordering of game days not because members actually wanted to play the scenarios, but because convention coordinators wanted to pad their personal collection of LIVING CITY™ adventures (and the magical item certificates that come with them). We can only service so many requests for week-long private "game days" featuring ten LIVING CITY adventures, for which scoring packets are never, ever turned in. It's simply a waste of everyone's time to provide administrative events like this, and we can't afford to do it any longer.

LIVING DEATH AND LIVING JUNGLE CONVERSION

The LIVING DEATH™ and LIVING JUNGLE™ campaigns are converting from AD&D® to the new Third Edition DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® rules. All scenarios for both campaigns played after the new year will use the new rules set, and players are expected to convert their characters before they play their first Third Edition scenario. Rules for creating new heroes and converting existing characters are online now. For Living Death, check out http://www.wizards.com/rpga/ld/Welcome.asp. For Living Jungle, point your browser to http://www.wizards.com/rpga/lj/Welcome.asp.

NEWS FROM THE BRANCHES

ASIA-PACIFIC

Well, here we are in 2001, and this time there's no doubt it really is the 21st century, the new Millennium.

This issue of *Polyhedron* features an article by Matt Brebner, a New Zealand member. Last issue, Geoff Skellams, from Canberra, had an article printed. Several other members from this region have submitted material to HQ, and it's gratifying to see their work in print.

The biggest thing that's happened in this part of the world in the last couple of months was *Polyhedron* #144. While I'm certain there are members out there—worldwide, not just Asia-Pacific—who see anything not D&D® related as a waste of space, I've heard only good things about 144.

The next biggest thing was issue 1 of the *LIVING GREYHAWK Journal*. There has been a four or five percent increase in GUILD-LEVEL™ membership here, most of whom signed up because "I want the Greyhawk magazine." I can only hope this has been a global phenomenon.

On the convention scene, not a lot has been going on—it's the wrong time of the academic year for that. Conventions start up in January, when everyone has recovered from their New Year's parties.

On the club scene, the Hall of Heroes and Heroines continues to grow, due in large part to the efforts of the club's leaders. Doug Clutterbuck in particular has been working hard to promote the Network to gamers in Western Australia (the other WA). LIVING

GREYHAWK has taken on a life of it's own, but I'll leave what's happening there for the people concerned to put in the *Journal*. Suffice to say that the folks in Far North Queensland and Tony Dooley's people in New Zealand have been very busy, with apologies to anyone I've missed.

Until next time,

WES NICHOLSON
ASIA-PACIFIC BRANCH MANAGER
Wes@dynamite.com.au

CONTINENTAL AMERICAS

Greetings, fellow members! Pray, pardon the brevity of this missive, but things are in flux at HQ these days. Tom Ko is going back to school and has left the company, leaving us without an official Branch Manager for the time being. Not to worry though: Robert Wiese and Scott Magner have picked up most of Tom's major responsibilities, and we'll all pitch in to make sure the job gets done. I'm doing my share as well, which includes giving you this update on what's happening in the Continental Americas.

WINTER FANTASY™ is the biggest thing on our minds right now. As of this writing, more members have pre-registered for the show than the total number of people who attended last year, so we're looking forward to a very busy weekend in Fort Wayne, Indiana. The LIVING FORCE™ campaign will kick off there, and we'll be celebrating the RPGA's 20th anniversary with a big party on Saturday night. As a sort of "anniversary present," we made registration at WINTER FANTASY free to GUILD-LEVEL members, so we hope to see every member within 300 miles of Fort Wayne show up. (If you're not a GUILD-LEVEL member when you show up, registering for the show makes you one, so you can't lose!) Between LIVING GREYHAWK, LIVING CITY, LIVING FORCE campaigning and all the Classic gaming and Interactives, *Winter Fantasy* is becoming the preeminent roleplaying convention in North America, second only to the GEN CON Game Fair (and maybe even a bit better because it's exclusively for roleplayers). Be there or be square!

Let the games continue!

DAVID WISE
RPGA WORLDWIDE MANAGER
wiseguy@wizards.com

EUROPE

Hail and well met from the Continent of Europe! Welcome to the exciting new year 2001! We've received such great response from you all on our new *Polyhedron* and the *LIVING GREYHAWK Journal*. It's nice to know that you support our decision to consolidate our existing magazines into a single globally focused *Polyhedron*. Our goal is to get you what you want in the format and timing that's best for you, so please keep those ideas, opinions and questions coming.

These last few months in 2000 have been a little easier on the staff than the summer (finally). However, we did have two large conventions take place in two Southern European Countries. Lucca Comics and Games in Italy and the Athens Game Fair in Greece were both hugely successful. DUNGEONS & DRAGONS received the prize for "Best Translated Product" in Italy, and Greece ran a very successful convention with more than 30 tables playing.

The LIVING GREYHAWK campaign is bringing in a lot more European members than we initially anticipated. We got a lot of applications from members who wanted to help out and write for us. Never think we have enough volunteers, we can always use more helpful hands, so please keep in touch. The newest addition to the LIVING Campaign concept is LIVING FORCE. January is the premier month for LIVING FORCE in the US, but unfortunately Europe will have to wait a little longer before it hits our countries. Keep an eye out for its release, we'll tell you all about it—right here in *Polyhedron*.

The schedules for next year look busier than ever before and we plan to add activity in even more countries. Our distributors in Eastern Europe are lining up to get RPGA activity in their region and support all roleplaying systems.

2000 was the kick-off for the RPGA in Europe—and we're still growing... In order to run the network smoothly, we are still looking for Regional Directors for some countries (e.g. France Belgium, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, and many more). If you are a dedicated roleplayer and have some spare time on your hands, drop us a line at rpgaeurope@wizards.be. We will be more than willing to send you a task description and to wheel you in as a volunteer or Regional Director.

We are looking towards an exciting new year: full of activities, new opportunities and conventions. We hope to meet you at some of them.

May the Fortunes smile upon you.

ANN VAN DAM
RPGA MANAGER, EUROPE
rpgaeurope@wizards.be

UNITED KINGDOM, IRELAND, AND SOUTH AFRICA

The festivities are a dimming haze. The new systems bought for Christmas are now well thumbed and all the dice are bedded in. Monsters vanquished, we turn our attentions to the new campaigning season. The over wintering at home has caused this hero to put on a few pounds, but nothing running a few cons in 2001 can't rectify.

While sitting here in my comfy chair with a glass of wine and the latest campaign plans spread all around, I would like to take a while to reflect on the adventures had at the end of the 2000 campaign. Lets us also look forward to some early highlights of the new season.

September rounded up with the branch running would-be-heroes through roller coaster rides of adventure at the RAFWA (a closed event for the Armed Forces) annual general meeting and games weekend, plus Fallcon Oxford. Fallcon is a new event on the scene and hats off to Denis Douglas and his helpers for putting another 250+ single day con well and truly on the circuit. For those heroes and heroines who missed out on the chance to enjoy LIVING CITY and Classic adventures, be sure to pencil it in for next year.

November found us running games at Bifrost, Birmingham and Dragonmeet, London (more of this later). Demand for games, in particular LIVING GREYHAWK, has reached a level where we need more volunteers. If you think you would like to tantalise a few hapless adventurers then we'd like to hear from you at UKHQ.

And so the over wintering began, so to speak. Campaign done? Hardly. Plans for the new season are drawn up and the troops marshaled. High on the agenda is the first European Summit being held at Naish Holiday Village, Highcliffe, Dorset, England on the weekend of March 2nd to 4th inclusive. This will mirror WINTER FANTASY™ in the US and will become a regular on the event calendar here in Europe. Enjoy three days of non-stop gaming plus the chance to help shape the future of the RPGA in the years to come. Full details are available on the http://www.rpgauk.com Web site or by ringing UKHQ. This event also will see the launch of the LIVING FORCE campaign in the UK.

Various Clerics in Sarbreenar and the ruling body have called all SARBREENAR: THE LIVING CITY™ citizens together for a weekend of revelry and adventure. This again is the first of it's kind and will be held in Hinkley, Near Coventry, England on 26th and 27th May 2001. For more details, check out Sarbreenar on the RPGAUK Web site or contact Sean at UKHQ (email: seanc@wizards.com).

Other events we will be attending and providing adventure opportunities at in early 2001 are: Conpulsion 17–18 March, Edinburgh, Scotland; TowerCon 23–25 March, Blackpool, Lancashire, England; Student Nationals April 2001, De Montfort University, Leicester, England; Battlemasters 21-22 April, Loughborough University, Loughborough, England.

South Africa has seen the launch of full tournament tracking and the continued explosions of their monthly mini games days, the effect of which is to continue the healthy growth in GUILD-LEVEL memberships as we provide more and more of the adventure experiences players deserve. The start of LIVING GREYHAWK and development of South Africa's assigned region, the town of Dullstrand, is in full swing. For those in South Africa who want to get involved, contact Andre (andverm@mweb.co.za) or Grant(gracrom@icon.co.za).

From the UK campaign HQ... May the Goddess Tymora shine kindly upon your d20s everywhere.

IAN RICHARDS
BRANCH MANAGER, UK,
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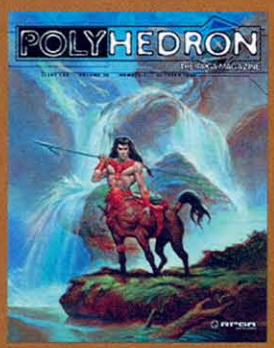
What a Ripoff!



Reaction to *Polyhedron* #144 (October, 2000), the first new-look global issue, has been extremely positive, with members from all over the world writing in to tell us how much they like the new look. Our sneak peak at the new FORGOTTEN REALMS® DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® campaign setting was the most popular feature, with articles on the *City of Ravens* novel, Raven's Bluff's temple of Sune, and suggestions on using Feats in Third Edition D&D® receiving extremely high marks, as well.

Send us your thoughts on this issue by flipping to the back of the magazine and filling out the Reader Response Survey on page 62. If you don't want to destroy your *Polyhedron* (hey we understand!), send us an email. We use your responses to build a better magazine.

I just received the October issue (# 144) of the new *Polyhedron*® magazine. It arrived almost in shreds, with the front cover nearly completely ripped off. Could you please send me a replacement. It would be most appreciated.

This is actually the second magazine I've received from the RPGA in this condition. The problem seems to be made worse by the fact that the magazines are mailed as is, with no envelope or wrapping. As a suggestion, maybe you should consider mailing your magazines in those plastic envelopes, like many other magazines do.

Congrats on the new look of *Polyhedron*, though. It looks great, from what I can tell from the tattered pages!

Nigel D. Broad
Los Angeles, California
USA

A replacement issue is on its way, Nigel. Over the last two months, many of you have contacted us about damaged Polyhedrons. *With the switch to the new publishing format, we did away with the mailer cover of old, figuring that the increased paper stock would protect the magazines from too much wear-and-tear.*

Unfortunately, a whole lot of them got chewed up in the mail. We've received many reports of members receiving only the issue's torn off cover. You probably noticed that the last issue of the LIVING GREYHAWK Journal *came to you in a protective plastic polybag. Though that's the ideal protection from the ravages of the postal system, it's also extremely expensive, and we'll only be using that method of mailing when the issue includes some bonus such as the poster-sized map of the City of Greyhawk included in that issue. The little sticker that holds together the pages of this issue is an experiment in protecting the magazine. We hope it'll keep things in good shape.*

If you do receive a damaged copy of one of our magazines, or simply aren't receiving your issues at all, send an email to custserv@wizards.com. Be sure to include your full name, RPGA #, and complete mailing address. If you don't have email, send an old fashioned letter to the address for your branch office found on the last page of this magazine.

LIVING SILLY

Congrats on the new full-color *Polyhedron*. I enjoy the new look so much better than the boring layout of the past (not that I could complain much for a free subscription that came along with my RPGA membership). I also really enjoy the *LIVING GREYHAWK™ Journal* and look forward to the next issue. Please keep up the great job that you did in the first issue... my players really loathe you guys for reprinting the Sons of Kyuss.

Now for some of the things that bother me: I have been playing in and with the RPGA® Network and LIVING CITY™ since about the early 90s. I have been through the dark times and the "new" good times with TSR/WotC transitions and new editions.

One thing I have always loathed is the inherent silliness

of the LIVING CITY campaign, and by this I mean the moronic naming conventions and irritating themes that pervade the setting. For example, *The Palace of Passion* (*Polyhedron* #144) has a high priestess of Sune named "Candi Kane." I read on that she is in charge of the "Body Beautiful Program."

This sounds like something I might see on a late-nite infomercial. Not at all the High Fantasy theme that I would expect from the FORGOTTEN REALMS. I would have thought that the LIVING CITY materials would be written by full-time gamers who share in the wonder and vision the Realms setting has to offer, not to tear it down and bring it to a farcical low. I know that LIVING CITY is a setting directed by participating players and DMs who add to the whole, but when the flavor of the setting is so debased from the original material that the whole seems like some ersatz collective, it seems to lower it to the lowest level possible. I find myself thinking that maybe with some of these themes we may need a Living Melrose setting. Perhaps when RPGA members realize that farce and slapstick only devalues long term consistency of settings and play will this sort of thing ever be solved.

Thanks for listening and please keep up the good work.

Randy Patton
Ceresco, Michigan
USA

Believe it or not, some of the character names in the Palace of Passion *article caused a great deal of teeth gnashing and heated discussion here in* Polyhedron's *editorial offices. The decision to go forward with an article that contained anachronisms and, for lack of a better term, "goofy" names came down to two primary factors. Firstly, most of the LIVING CITY articles appearing in these pages reflect places or NPCs who have already appeared in one or more sanctioned scenario. Candi Kane, for instance, has turned up in at least one popular adventure as a high-ranking member of the church clergy. Not including her in the article (barring an off-stage name-induced murder) would have been an oversight.*

Perhaps more importantly, the very nature of a shared-world enterprise like the LIVING CITY campaign means that it's got to be a whole lot of things to a whole lot of people. Whereas you might not appreciate a silly name in your home campaign, an awful lot of members probably would, and an even greater number most likely don't care one way or another. Keeping the campaign vibrant and interesting for everyone is a constant struggle.

We don't, however, consider it a closed issue. We're interested in hearing from our readers on the matter. Do anachronisms and strangely-named characters "cheapen" the LIVING CITY campaign? How would you *prefer that we deal with the matter?*

SOME TALL ORDERS

Hi. Just got my new issue of *Polyhedron* yesterday. I did something I don't usually do and started reading the thing from cover to cover. This and the *LIVING GREYHAWK Journal* really make me glad I joined the RPGA.

The *Polyhedron* is really great. Lots of great articles, especially on the Ecology of Dungeons.

I should like to see a Third Edition D&D adventure featuring the Githyanki by Bruce Cordell inside the pages of *Polyhedron*. You asked what we wanted to see, and that's what I'd like to see. I'm not going to ask for something crazy like having Gary Gygax do a level of Castle Greyhawk each issue of the *LIVING GREYHAWK Journal* or anything like that.

Byron Odwazny
Poway, California
USA

While we can't promise you'll see a githyanki adventure from Bruce Cordell in these pages in the near future, we do have some news that's sure to interest you. Bruce just finished work on the Psionics Handbook, *a 160-page hardcover accessory for the new* DUNGEONS & DRAGONS *rules. The book is set for a March, 2001 release. Best of all, it includes a ton of information on the Githyanki and their foes, the Githzerai.*

As for getting Gary to develop levels of Castle Greyhawk for the LIVING GREYHAWK Journal. . . *well, don't expect anything soon. What you can expect to see are articles from Rob Kuntz, the official co-DM of the original Greyhawk campaign. Rob's got a lot to say about the City of Greyhawk, and who knows? Some of his musings might even touch on the most infamous dungeon of all time.*

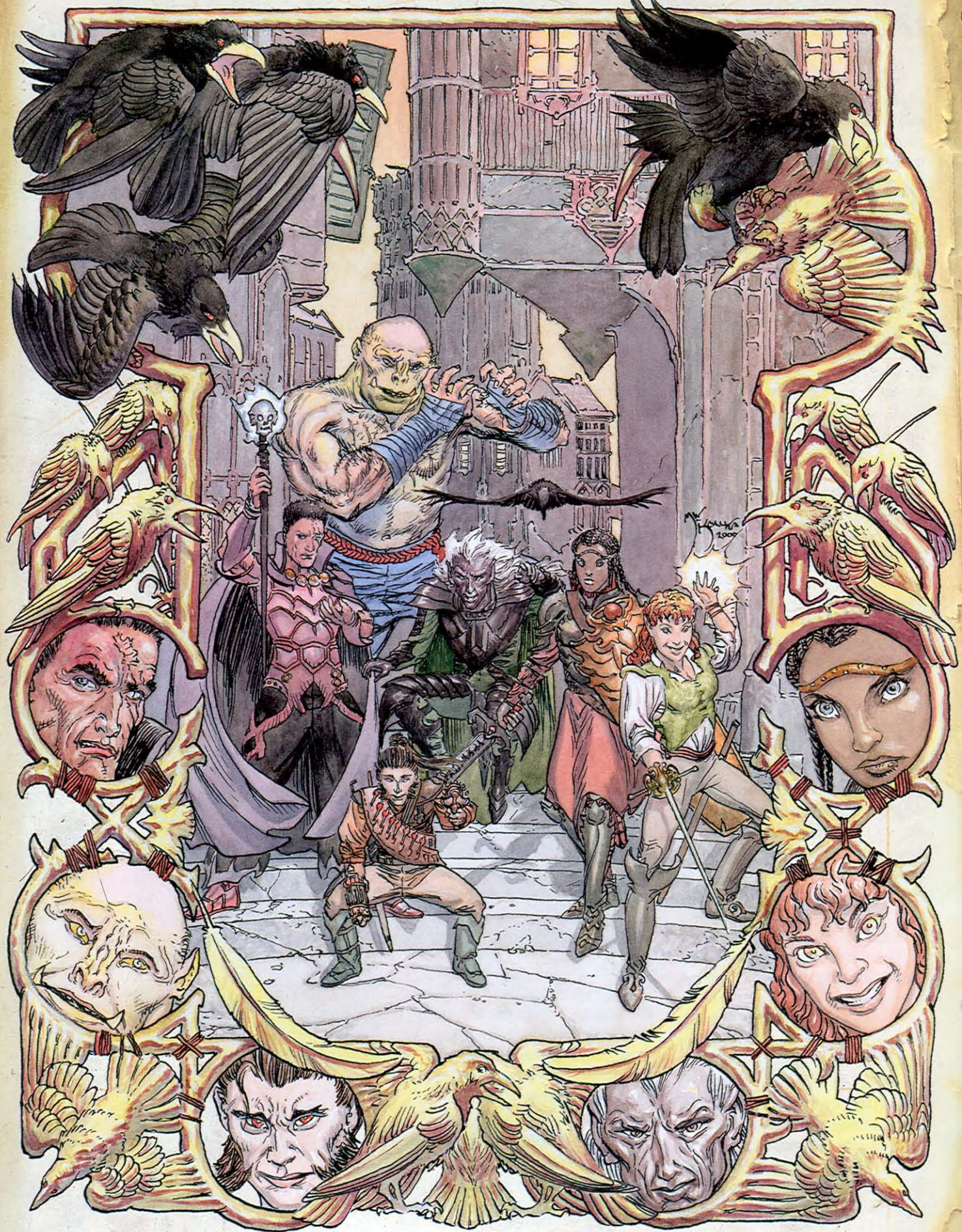
WELL SAID

Re: Polyhedron #144:

Now THAT's a Polyhedron!

Christopher Allen
Dallas, Texas
USA

We couldn't agree more.



LIVING CITY CONVERSION GUIDE

The Whys of Conversion

BY DAVID WISE

It's Saturday, October 21, as I write this. The LIVING CITY™ Ravens Bluff Board is in town, and we're hashing through the conversion of the LC campaign to the 3rd Edition DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® system—not just the mechanics, mind you, but all the issues surrounding the job. In fact, some of the toughest subjects don't have much to do with game mechanics at all. If mechanically converting the venerable 2nd Edition campaign into a clean-running 3rd Edition campaign was the only challenge, we practically could've talked about it over the phone and simply emailed conversion charts to one another for evaluation and feedback. However, we've also been debating the effects of the grand change upon the members, and perceptions that could plague the Network until the new LC campaign has had a proper shakedown and you've all had a chance to get to know the new version.

As we've struggled with the prospect of *discomfort* that may accompany the conversion, we've been asking each other how to get the members through to the better times ahead. We fear that some of you may go ballistic in the process of conversion, or feel like going that way, and that many of you may look upon the 3rd Edition model with a sort of 2nd Edition mindset, which may lead to you not like what you see. In addition, there are members who rationally argue that there's no reason to convert at all, and on a certain level they may be right: After all, if everyone was having fun, why make the change? Perhaps most importantly of all, some members may ask, "If the RPGA® Network's mission is to serve the needs and interests of its members, and its members don't need or aren't interested in converting the LC campaign, who is the RPGA *really* serving, anyway?"

We could tell you that the existing campaign simply can't function on a straight conversion to 3rd Edition D&D® rules, leading inevitably to a terminal breakdown in the absence of 2nd Edition AD&D® mechanics and support, and we would be correct. We also could tell you that not everyone has been having fun in Ravens Bluff, because there are some historical developments that have, in the long run, crippled the campaign and made it exceedingly difficult to play fairly, and we'd be right about that too. We could even tell you that the members who most oppose conversion are a relatively small albeit vocal percentage of the global membership, and that would be true too. However, none of these reasons can make you feel good about the change, let alone accept it. In the long run, the only acceptable way to handle the LC conversion is to gain your immediate understanding and hope that the new campaign gains your eventual approval. Of course, our sincere belief is that once you make the transition, you'll never look back.

So here's my attempt to make you understand.

For as long as the RPGA existed, up until this last year, it was merely an extension of the then-TSR and now-Wizards of the Coast roleplaying business. While both companies have always seen a value in supporting roleplaying activity, the traditional business mission has been to make the best roleplaying games in the industry, using our own expertise and experience to determine what the market demanded and then to deliver it. Meanwhile, the RPGA was established as a sort of fan club on the side, designed to build brand loyalty to D&D by creating a somewhat elite organization whose members received special benefits—so far, so good as far as basic business theory goes. But then things got a bit more complicated.

TSR released the 2nd Edition AD&D game, and about that time the RPGA joined the action with the advent of a new concept in roleplaying, the LIVING™

A NOTE TO OUR UK MEMBERS

This conversion section of *Polyhedron* addresses forthcoming changes in the US-based LIVING CITY — Ravens Bluff campaign. SARBREENAR: THE LIVING CITY is expected to convert to Third Edition DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® (pending a member vote) by Conception, which will be held in Dorset, England on Friday 2nd to Sunday 4th, March, 2001. Keep your eyes on future issues of *Polyhedron* for more details.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY MICHAEL W. KALUTA

campaign. Since the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting had been designated the official world of the AD&D game, the Network staked a claim in the Vast and founded its first signature campaign in the city of Ravens Bluff. From the company's point of view, this was a great idea because it gave the members some ownership of TSR's primary game world and thus drove sales. Unfortunately, from the company's point of view, this was also a troublesome idea because it brought the development of Faerûn into potential conflict, as the R&D department published extensive materials about the Realms while the RPGA campaign sought to create its own source material, driven by the members. Therefore, in order to avoid contradictory material in either FORGOTTEN REALMS products or RPGA scenarios, TSR drew an imaginary line across the top of the Vast and said, "We will never develop source material for the area below this line, and the RPGA should never attempt to take its campaign into the world beyond." The arrangement was fairly convenient and safe, but it led to unintended consequences.

By essentially trapping the LC campaign within the Vast, it became disconnected from the greater Realms. While the RPGA remained quick to take advantage of FORGOTTEN REALMS rules developments, such as new classes and kits, Faerûnian history proceeded in one direction while events in Ravens Bluff took their own course. This created a divergence between official "canon" and RPGA "canon," and from there R&D and the RPGA proceeded along their own, separate paths. As the RPGA had less and less to do with the official campaign, it became easier and easier for TSR to discount, if not ignore, the Network and its campaigns, as the two entities had so little in common.

Meanwhile, LC campaign directors came and went, as did RPGA directors. With each successive generation came new priorities, varied sensibilities regarding campaign balance, and diverse influences upon overall development. Since the R&D department remained uninvolved, the LC campaign evolved independently of both the FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign world and the 2nd Edition AD&D game. This led to an increasing body of "house rules," and thus to a campaign that grew increasingly difficult to adjudicate and control. Meanwhile, cert levels waxed and waned over the years, creating some generations of ultra-powerful characters while others could only hope that another era of "Monty Haul" would someday grace their characters. Many gamers—ever the system-beaters of the world—discovered ways to use the campaign rules egregiously to their advantages, and some of them got away with it for a long time. In short, without a baseline campaign, controlled and monitored by the experts who designed the system, the LC campaign has become an unruly monster with a fatal heart condition.

To use a computer-game analogy, there have been so many software patches, written by so many without regard to the basic programming, that the entire application teeters on the brink of a major crash. What's worse, the original software manufacturers have no way to debug the programming, partially because it's so far gone, and partially because they've moved on to a whole new platform. In this light, last year's vote on whether to convert or restart the LC campaign is more accurately described as a vote to create a sequel, porting characters from the old game to the new, or to begin a whole new game altogether. Meanwhile, those who would argue that we should do neither should still be playing *Pong* on their original *Atari* consoles and liking it.

So along came David Wise, with a shiny, new MBA degree and a will to fix things. While a member of the management team that oversees the entire WotC RPG business, he learned that the key to business success in the new millennium is in the *Network*—not specifically the RPGA Network but in the entire collection of people involved in roleplaying games, including both the company and the consumer. No longer can a company do a little market research, invent a product, then send it to market amidst a fanfare of promotion, leaving it to the customer to look and buy or not buy. Thanks to the Internet, we're all connected now; we all talk to each other about what we like and don't like, about what we expect and don't expect, and the company is just one voice among many. As a company, you either join the conversation and make money by responding to what people say, or you ignore the conversation and pay the price. Power to the people! On the other hand, power to the company! Both parties are better off for behaving interactively because everybody gets what they want (at least in theory).

My mission, then, has been to create value in the Network so it can grow: value for the members, and value for the company. Both contribute essential elements to the RPGA, and both profit by the relationship. The members want great games, a community of fellow gamers, and rewards for their commitment to the Network. Conveniently, the company wants the exact same thing. Both entities

bring time, dedication, experience, expertise, and money to the RPGA, which strives to function as a meeting place of interests and activities, and thus serve them all. It's not always easy, but it's always worth the effort.

Getting back to the LC campaign, then, the time has come to bring WotC (in particular, R&D) and the gamers (in particular, the RPGA) back together, for mutual benefit. As we move forward, the LC campaign will comply with the baseline *D&D* game while allowing for the high-power tone that the members enjoy. Furthermore, R&D will be intimately involved in the ongoing development of the campaign, not as a director or rules tyrant but as a resource and a contributor. Better still, R&D staff members will participate directly in the campaign, achieving a deeper understanding of members' needs and interests while enjoying the company of hardcore gamers, their favorite kind of people (because they're hardcore gamers, themselves). In the future, you can expect to see some of them at the gaming table during various conventions, and maybe find a scenario of two with a well-known name on it. Best of all, WotC has moved the RPGA from the fringes of the business to the very center of its plans and strategies: RPGA members are the front line, the playtesters, the insiders, the evangelists, the most tangible manifestation of "the consumer" that the company can identify. That makes you pretty damned important, which is the way it should be.

To sum up, if the LIVING CITY campaign was the one and only function of the RPGA, then we'd let it take its own course and allow the chips to fall as they might. BUT, LIVING campaigns don't stand alone, even if all your RPGA membership means to you is the opportunity to play in them. Indeed, the RPGA is really so much more than its LIVING campaigns, and that statement is becoming increasingly apparent with each passing year. While LIVING campaigns continue to represent our primary Network activity, we also provide gaming for major and minor conventions, playtest and review WotC products, publish high-production-value magazines, publish our members' work, cultivate better Game Masters, expose new gamers to roleplaying, and so forth. As a member of the RPGA, you represent the quintessential gamer, who's moved beyond the private home campaign to join the greater community of hobbyists. *Living* campaigns are just one facet of your experience. Thus, the conversion of the LIVING CITY campaign is part of a larger picture, and part of a plan to create a full-service RPGA for the future—it's a primary computer application that attracts lots of users, but it's not the computer itself.

I asked WotC to allow me to lead the RPGA Network because I knew it should and could become the centerpiece of the entire roleplaying industry, and because I knew that the members deserved a lot more than they had gotten over the last few years (and maybe since the club was established). A return on membership dues was beside the point here—I wanted to create for the members a community where the level of activity is equal to their passion and enthusiasm for the hobby. I wanted to provide roleplayers with a gathering point from which they could say to the entire industry, "We are your best customers, so listen to our opinions and show us a good time." WotC, in turn, expected me to create an organization that serves a global community and enriches the roleplaying experience across the board, for which they were willing to fund all our activities and programs. In short, I came aboard to program a suite of applications for the RPGA computer, and I called upon the company to provide the funds for upgrading both the hard- and software. (Your dues provide important funds, too, demonstrating another example of the partnership between the company and the members.)

You may not believe it yet, but the new LC campaign is going to be *much* better than the old. Don't be spooked by apparent losses of power and status in the conversion! The new D&D is more powerful and efficient than the old, just as the computer that used to fill an entire room is nowhere near as powerful and efficient as the one that now fits in your lap. Five or six floppy disks may *feel* like more programming than one CD, but you tell me which one is better. Of course, there's no longer the danger of a system crash, either.

The LC Board has worked very hard to convert the campaign in a way that is fair, makes sense, preserves the best and eliminates the worst of the old version, and allows the members to continue playing some of their favorite characters. Over the next few months, the work will continue until any bugs are found and rooted out. We hope you'll love the new campaign from the start, but if you don't, we hope you'll at least give it a few sessions before you pass judgment. As always, we'll be listening.

Sincerely,

David W Wise

David Wise
RPGA Worldwide Manager

THE LIVING CITY CHARACTER CONVERSION GUIDELINES

These guidelines give you the basic information needed to convert your 2nd Edition ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® (AD&D®) LIVING CITY™ character to 3rd Edition DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® (D&D®). The goal of the conversion process is to create as simple a transition as possible while maintaining the highest degree of fairness for the entire membership. Remember that 3rd Edition D&D is a significantly different game in terms of character skills, feats, and class abilities; try not to be limited by 2nd Edition thinking.

This document covers conversion of characters only. Certificate Conversion (items, boons, favors, etc.) will be covered in a separate document found on the LIVING CITY page of our Web site.

STEP 1: EXPERIENCE POINTS

One of the most controversial topics in LIVING CITY conversion is how to make an equitable transfer of experience points. Due to the fact that 3rd Edition has one experience table for all classes and the fundamental difference in the way multi/dual-classing are handled, your character's experience point total and level may be different in 3rd Edition. In order to remain as fair to all concerned players as possible, a conversion table based on total experience points has been developed. Follow the steps below to determine your new character's new character level.

1. Total all experience points your character currently possesses. Please note that this does not include any experience points lost for whatever reason prior to conversion, including kits and meta-campaign activities.
2. Find the row that your character's 2nd Edition experience point total falls within. If your experience total falls between two values, take the lower one.
3. Find the 3rd Edition experience point total listed in that row for your character.
4. Using the last two columns of the chart on the opposite page, find your character's 3rd Edition character level.

EXAMPLE—John's "Feldspar the Great" is a Wizard in 2e and has accumulated 899,000 xp. Finding his experience on the chart above, we see that he has 12 total character levels in which to re-create Feldspar. Jason's "Telquin the Rogue" was a fighter/thief that had a total of 375,000 xp. Telquin will have 10 total character levels with which to re-create his character.

STEP 2: CREATE THE NEW VERSION OF YOUR CHARACTER

Take your total levels, as figured in Step 1, and re-create your existing character in 3rd Edition D&D by following the steps below:

1. Obtain a copy of the LIVING CITY Character Creation Guidelines, the Character Log, and the *Forgotten Realms Guidelines*. These can be downloaded from www.rpga.com or www.rpga.net/lc/convert.
2. Make a character with total levels equal to your calculated levels by following the LIVING CITY Character Creation Guidelines. You may create your character using levels in any allowed class, including allowed Prestige Classes if your character qualifies for them. Your new character may, in fact, be completely different from your previous version of the character.
3. You should keep a log of your character's advancement, including classes added, new skill ranks and feats, and so forth.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR CREATING YOUR NEW CHARACTER

When re-creating your character, please try to stay with the character concept. Keep the same name. That way people have at least one way of recognizing the new and improved you.

PROJECT STAT POINT

Characters with additional Ability Points, Hit Points, or Skill Ranks from Project Stat Point will receive a letter on or about December 10th, 2000. This letter will explain what you have received for your character, how to add it to your character, and why certain choices were made.

STEP 3: SPECIAL CHARACTERS

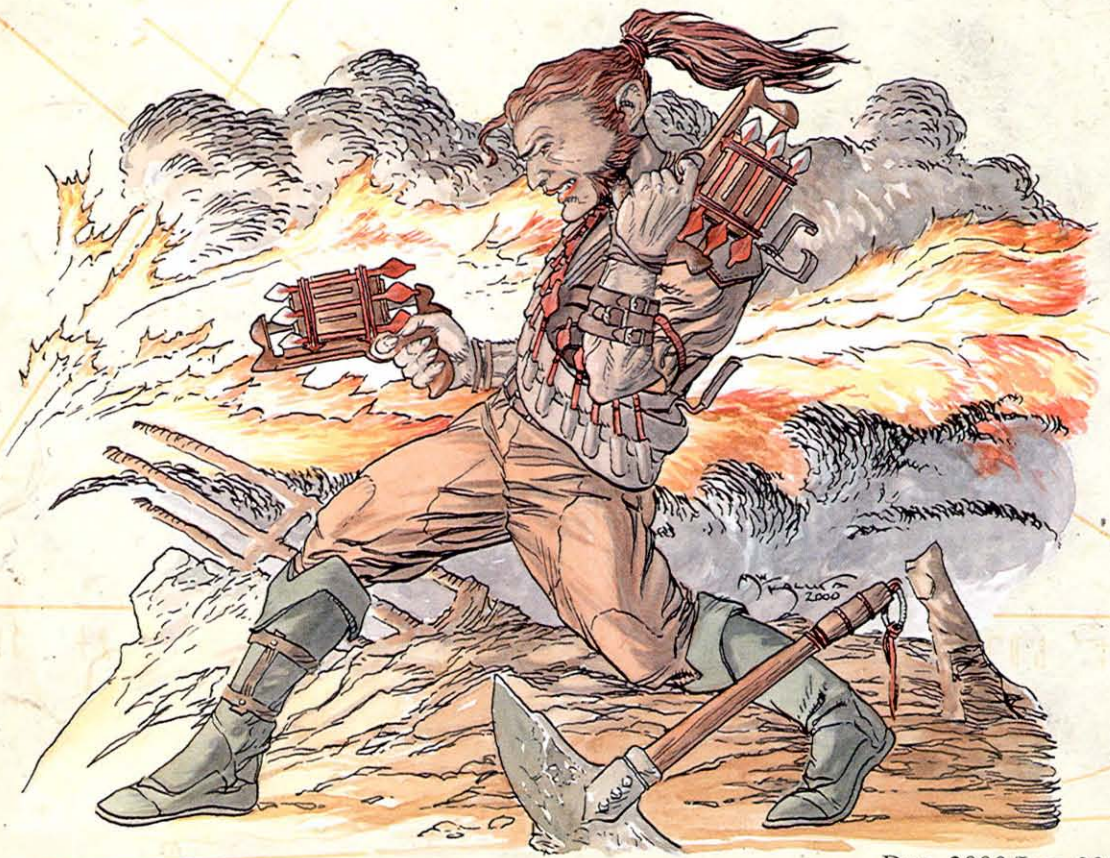
If your PC is a "certed" character race, such as a drow or a wemic, you must contact the LIVING CITY Chairman Troy Daniels (see Step 4 for email address). He will work with you to create your character and give you the additional information that you need in order to be ready for the LIVING CITY in 2001. If you are playing a "certed" character class, such as Dwarven Chanter, then just remake your character according to the guidelines above. Your class cert is no longer required, and should be ignored or saved for posterity. No characters will be grandfathered into classes that do not exist in 3rd Edition D&D.

If you have a grandfather letter from the RPGA allowing you to play something not normally allowed by the previous Living City Character Creation Guidelines, treat the grandfather letter as a "cert" to play that race or class or whatever, and see above for how to convert it.

STEP 4: QUESTIONS

If you have a question about the Living City Conversion Guidelines please email LCConvert@rpga.net. Your questions will be answered as quickly as possible. Also, subscribe to the LCConvert list at Egroups for up to date and current information (see www.egroups.com).

2E XP	3E XP	3E LEVELS	2E XP	3E XP	3E LEVELS	2E XP	3E XP	3E LEVELS
0	0	1	70,950	24,500	7	1,282,250	91,000	14
453	250	1	80,250	26,250	7	1,354,750	94,500	14
906	500	1	89,550	28,000	8	1,427,250	98,000	14
1,359	750	1	107,350	30,000	8	1,499,750	101,500	14
1,813	1,000	2	125,150	32,000	8	1,572,250	105,000	15
2,266	1,500	2	142,950	34,000	8	1,644,750	108,750	15
2,719	2,000	2	160,750	36,000	9	1,717,250	112,500	15
3,172	2,500	2	198,250	38,250	9	1,789,750	116,250	15
3,625	3,000	3	235,750	40,500	9	1,862,250	120,000	16
4,531	3,750	3	273,250	42,750	9	1,939,250	124,000	16
5,438	4,500	3	310,750	45,000	10	2,016,250	128,000	16
6,344	5,250	3	350,750	47,500	10	2,093,250	132,000	16
7,250	6,000	4	390,750	50,000	10	2,170,250	136,000	17
9,125	7,000	4	430,750	52,500	10	2,247,250	140,250	17
11,000	8,000	4	470,750	55,000	11	2,324,250	144,500	17
12,875	9,000	4	537,625	57,750	11	2,401,250	148,750	17
14,750	10,000	5	604,500	60,500	11	2,478,250	153,000	18
18,250	11,250	5	671,375	63,250	11	2,555,250	157,500	18
21,750	12,500	5	738,250	66,000	12	2,632,250	162,000	18
25,250	13,750	5	806,250	69,000	12	2,709,250	166,500	18
28,750	15,000	6	874,250	72,000	12	2,786,250	171,000	19
34,650	16,500	6	942,250	75,000	12	2,866,250	175,750	19
40,550	18,000	6	1,010,250	78,000	13	2,946,250	180,500	19
46,450	19,500	6	1,078,250	81,250	13	3,026,250	185,250	19
52,350	21,000	7	1,146,250	84,500	13	3,106,250	190,000	20
61,650	22,750	7	1,214,250	87,750	13			



LIVING CITY™—RAVENS BLUFF CHARACTER CREATION GUIDELINES VERSION 3.02—JANUARY, 2001

These guidelines provide the basic information you need to create a starting LIVING CITY™ character. Please be aware that these guidelines, like the LIVING CITY campaign, will change. Our commitment to you is that any changes will add options to characters (as more D&D® or FORGOTTEN REALMS® material is published), not take away options. Very infrequently we may have to restrict options that were previously available. We will only do so after careful consideration. These guidelines have a version number and date. All LIVING CITY characters must comply with the most current version of the D&D *Player's Handbook*, *Forgotten Realms Guidelines*, other allowed supplements, and this document. The Forgotten Realms Guidelines can be found online at www.wizards.com/rpga/LC/conversion.asp.

When options are added for characters, you may add them to your character the next time he or she gains a level. You may never "retroactively" add character options or re-make a character due to the inclusion of a new character option. See "Adding New Material" near the end of these guidelines for more information.

To create a 1st level character, turn to page 4 of the *Player's Handbook* and use the steps outlined in the Character Creation Basics section (except where they are modified as outlined below or in the *Forgotten Realms Guidelines*). The hierarchy for which source takes precedence is as follows: Character Creation Guidelines, *Forgotten Realms Guidelines*, *Player's Handbook*.

STEP 1: ABILITY SCORES

To put all players on an even footing, the LIVING CITY campaign uses the Nonstandard Point Buy method of ability score generation, found in Chapter 2 of the D&D® *Dungeon Master's Guide*. The LIVING CITY setting is considered a "High Fantasy Campaign;" hence, each character uses 32 points distributed among all six statistics, just as the *Dungeon Master's Guide* indicates on page 20.

SCORE	COST	MODIFIER
6	—	-2
7	—	-2
8	0	-1
9	1	-1
10	2	0
11	3	0
12	4	+1
13	5	+1
14	6	+2
15	8	+2
16	10	+3
17	13	+3
18	16	+4
19	—	+4
20	—	+5

Apply racial modifiers to ability scores after the base scores are determined. Thus, ability scores range from 8—18 for humans, and 6—20 for nonhumans. Ability points gained as your character advances in level do not use this chart; they are full points and may be added as explained in the *Player's Handbook*.

STEP 2: CHOOSE RACE, CLASS, AND REGION

RACE

All players must choose a race for their character. Players may choose from the following races: human, shield dwarf, gold dwarf, moon elf, sun elf, wild elf, wood elf, rock gnome, half-elf (including half-drow), half-orc, strongheart halfling, and lightfoot halfling. Descriptions, game mechanics, and roleplaying hints are included in the *Forgotten Realms Guidelines*.

CLASS

Nearly all the information in Chapter 2: Classes of the *Player's Handbook* applies to the character classes of the LIVING CITY Campaign. The entries that follow focus on what is peculiar to the LIVING CITY Campaign rather than summarizing the facts in the *Player's Handbook* and the *Forgotten Realms Guidelines*.

BARBARIANS

Barbarians may not have "the Vast" as their home region.

CLERIC AND DRUID

Clerics and Druids must serve a specific non-evil deity from the *Forgotten Realms Guidelines*. If you multi-class, your new class must allow your current patron deity as well. Please see the section "Changing Deities" later in this document, for information regarding the penalties for changing patron deities.

Druids may begin play with one animal companion. Others may be acquired according to the class description in the *Player's Handbook*. Druids who live in Ravens Bluff (or any other city in the campaign setting) may only

acquire half the normally allowed hit dice of animal companions, as most animals shun city environments.

MONK
Monks may be from any non-evil monastic order, as listed in the *Forgotten Realms Guidelines.* Belonging to an order is not required for the character, but to take advantage of the multi-classing options available to monks in the FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign, the monk must belong to a published order and use that order's multi-classing options.

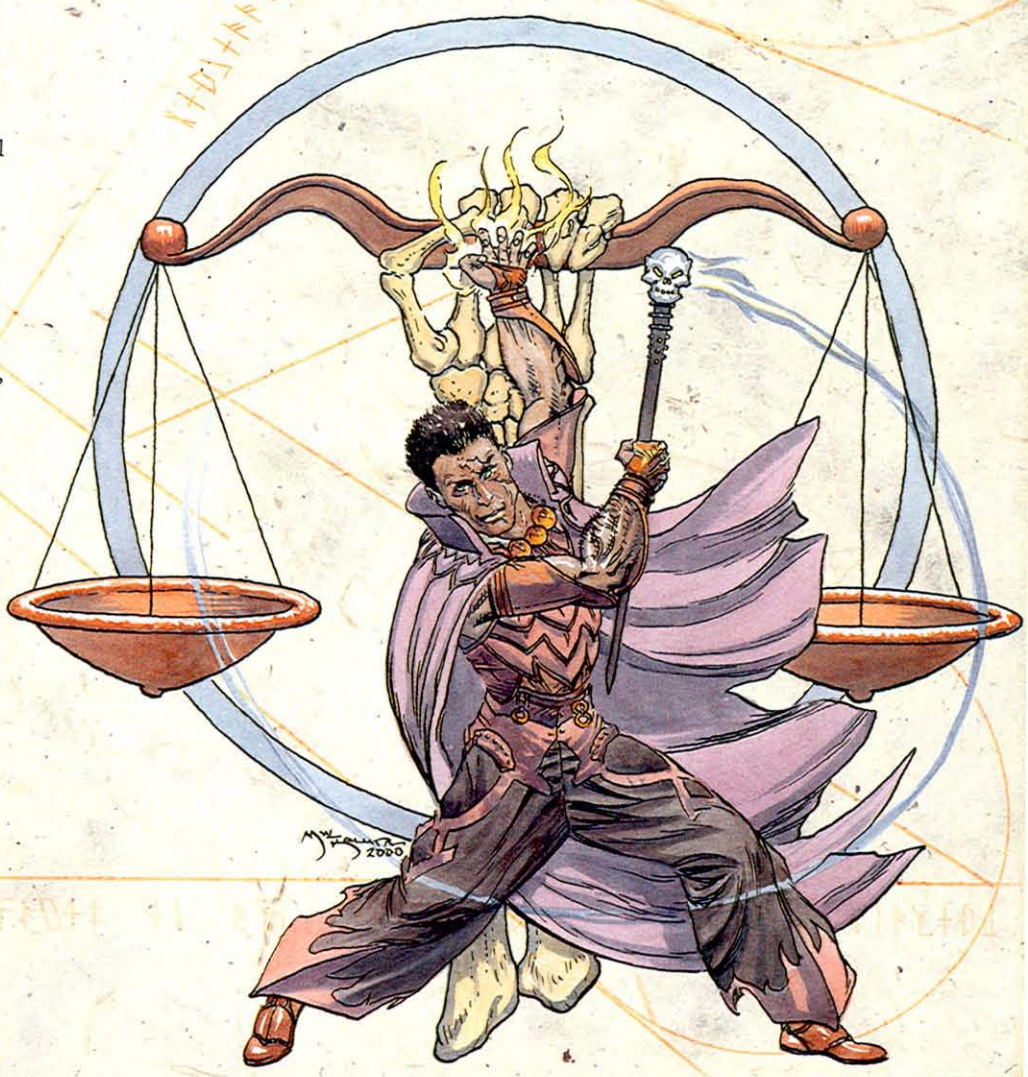
PALADIN
Paladins must choose any of the following as a patron deity, and may never have a patron deity who is not on this list:
Azuth, Arvoreen, Baervan Wildwanderer, Baravar Cloakshadow, Berronar Truesilver, Chauntea, Clangeddin Silverbeard, Cyrrollalee, Deneir, Eldath, Flandal Steelskin, Gaerdal Ironhand, Garl Glittergold, Gorm Gulthyn, Gwaeron Windstrom, Hathor, Helm, Hoar, Horus-Re, Ilmater, Isis, Jergal, Kelemvor, Lathander, Marthammor Duin, Mielikki, Milil, Moradin, Mystra, Nobanion, Osiris, Red Knight, Savras, Segojan Earthcaller, Shiallia Petyroyl, Siamorphe, Sune, Torm, Tyr, Ulutiu, Urogalan, Yondalla,

RANGER
A ranger must choose a non-evil patron deity by the time the character reaches 4th level in the Ranger class.

SORCERER AND WIZARD
The following are special familiars allowed in the LIVING CITY Campaign:
Hairy spider —Poisonous bite, darkvision
Lizard, tiny—Master gains a +2 bonus on Climb checks.
This creature is described in *Monster Compendium: Monsters of Faerûn.*

PRESTIGE CLASSES:
The following Prestige Classes are allowed for PCs: Arcane Archer, Archmage, Champion, Devotee, Disciple, Dwarven Defender, Hierophant, Loremaster, Runecaster, Seeker, and Shadowdancer. PCs must qualify for these classes as described in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* and the *Forgotten Realms Guidelines.* Other prestige classes may become available as part of the meta-campaign organizations, or as additions to these guidelines.

REGION
The *Player's Handbook* only requires you to choose a race and a class, but the FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign setting also requires you to choose a region in which your character grew up, or at least gained most of her early experience. Your region helps define your character as part of the world of Toril and provides additional choices for which feats and equipment you can have. You may choose to be from any region given in the *Forgotten Realms Guidelines.* All regions and their corresponding regional feats are allowed, with the following exceptions:
Dwarf, Gray; Elf, Drow; Gnome, Svirfneblin—These races are available only to those with special certificates.
EVERMEET—Only elves (with no drow blood whatsoever) are allowed to take this region.
RASHEMEN—You may be from Rashemen, but may not select the Ethran feat.



Another note on regions: As per the *Forgotten Realms Guidelines*, characters may also have access to regional feats after purchasing 2 ranks of Knowledge (local) for that region. In the LIVING CITY Campaign, you may select "The Vast" as a secondary region with only the skill rank cost. For any other region, your character must acquire the skill ranks and spend 365 day units (see below) living in the region. This means your character may be out of play for at least a year, and any carryover must be subtracted from the next year's total.

STEP 3: HIT POINTS

At 1st and 2nd level, assign your character maximum hit points for its class, including any Constitution bonuses. For each additional character level, assign hit points according to the new class by 75% of the maximum value for the class (rounding down), then adding any Constitution bonus. For example, a character adds 3 hit points upon gaining a new level in the Sorcerer class, plus any Constitution bonus, if applicable. A character adding a level of Fighter adds 7 plus Constitution bonus.

Paladin bonded mounts also use 75% of maximum hit points per hit die to calculate hit points. Druid animal companions use the standard "average hit point" values from the *Monster Manual* or other source describing them.

STEP 4: SKILLS

Players should follow the guidelines listed in the *Player's Handbook* with regards to calculating and choosing skills.

A few skills need brief additional rulings:

ALCHEMY SKILL AND CRAFT SKILL:
These skills do not allow you to craft items other than the ones that PCs can purchase normally (see Step 5).

KNOWLEDGE SKILL:
Knowledge skills cannot be anachronistic. Remember that the more specific a field of knowledge, the lower the difficulty class for information related to that knowledge—it is better to be specific in what you know. Knowledge skill ranks only allow Synergy bonuses to other skill checks at the DM's discretion.

PROFESSION SKILL:
At this time, profession skills can only be chosen from those listed in the Profession skill description in the *Player's Handbook*.

STEP 5: EQUIPMENT

A starting character receives the maximum amount of gold pieces for its class.

Players may purchase any equipment from Chapter 7: Equipment in the *Player's Handbook*, with the exception of tanglefoot bags, smoke sticks, and thunderstones. You may not purchase magical items for your character except through play opportunities.

The Carrying Capacity rule is used in the LIVING CITY campaign, so keep track of what your character is carrying and how much it weighs.

STEP 6: SELECT FEATS

Characters in the LIVING CITY Campaign may select feats using the guidelines in the *Player's Handbook*. In addition to the feats listed in the *Player's Handbook*, players may choose the feats listed in the *Forgotten Realms Guidelines*. Please note that some of these feats are "regional" feats, and as such, are restricted to characters from that region, as mentioned in the *Forgotten Realms Guidelines*.

PCs are not allowed to take the following feats from the *Forgotten Realms Guidelines*: Ethran, Sadistic Training, and all Shadowweave Magic Feats.

The Cast Runes feat has been modified in the following way: portable rune objects may be created during an adventure, and use the same rules as for scribing spells and making potions, below. Any other runes lose their magic at the end of an adventure, unless created through a meta-campaign activity.

STEP 7: DESCRIBE YOUR CHARACTER

You must choose an alignment from among the following: Lawful Good, Lawful Neutral, Neutral Good, Neutral, or Chaotic Good. Your alignment choice must meet all requirements for your character's class. Please note: no alignment allowed in the campaign is a free ticket to play an evil PC in any way. Evil characters (as determined by actions) are not permitted in the campaign. Any

infraction of this will result in the immediate loss of said character.

A character may begin play at any age from Adulthood to Old Age, as defined in the Age section of Chapter 6: Description, in the *Player's Handbook*. Age modifiers to ability scores are not used in the LIVING CITY campaign. The character may be of any height and weight allowed by the height and weight tables for the character's race.

STEP 8: PATRON DEITY

All characters in the LIVING CITY Campaign are expected to choose a non-evil patron deity, as outlined in the *Forgotten Realms Guidelines*. Those that do not choose a patron deity are not allowed to be brought back from the dead in any fashion. The worship of evil deities is not allowed for player characters.

CHANGING PATRON DEITIES

Divine spell-casters (clerics, druids, paladins, rangers of 4th class level or higher, and members of certain prestige classes) suffer serious penalties for changing patron deities. When changing deities, such characters must spend 163 day units (to represent the quest that must be undertaken), and pay the NPC priest who casts the *atonement* spell 500 gp plus a magic item worth 500 gp per character level. If the item is worth more, the priest does not make change. Please note that the *atonement* can only be cast by the local NPC high priest of the patron deity you are changing to; NO PC priests are allowed to cast this *atonement* spell for other PCs.

Divine spellcasters who are reincarnated as a different race may change to the racial deity for the new race which most closely matches the spheres and interests of the deity from the old race. This change does not cost anything. If the same character changes to a new racial deity that has different spheres or interests than the old one, the character must pay the full cost for changing deities. For example, a human divine spellcaster is reincarnated as an elf. The character previously served Sune. The character can change deities to Hanali Celanil, the elven "equivalent" of Sune, with no cost. A change to any other elven deity requires the character to pay the full cost.

Characters not receiving divine class powers may change patron deities as they desire.

STEP 9: PLAYING YOUR CHARACTER

DAY UNITS AND CHARACTER LOGS

Day units are used to record how PCs spend their time. By using day units, you need not worry exactly in what order adventures took place, or exactly when you researched a spell or created an item. Day units save you from taking your character out of play to perform non-adventuring activities. A day unit equals one day out of the campaign year. *All* players are required to use and keep track of these day unit costs on a log sheet.

Every year a PC receives 365 day units to spend on activities—adventuring, spell research, creating magic items, belonging to a knighthood, or managing a business all can potentially take part of a character's time. Adventures take 5 day units (unless specified otherwise). This represents not only the adventure itself, but also training in your respective classes, taking care of normal personal business, repair of equipment, and other day-to-day activities that are not a real part of the LIVING CITY Campaign.

A character log is a set of sheets that track information about which adventures the character has participated in, the judge information, any experience or treasure gained, and any notes about the adventure. Logs also are used to track meta-campaign activities and entries for any other character-changing event (such as changing deities if there is a cost). Logs are required for all LIVING CITY characters.

LEARNING NEW ARCANE SPELLS

Wizards learn two new arcane spells when advancing a class level in the Wizard class; these are learned as part of training time. Any additional spells the wizard wants to learn cost additional time as described on page 155 of the *Player's Handbook*: one day unit to learn the spell, and one additional day unit per spell level to write it into a spellbook. The LIVING CITY Campaign does not require a Spellcraft check in order to learn a new spell.

Sorcerers and bards must choose their spells from the appropriate spell lists, unless they have a special certificate that allows them to do otherwise. Sorcerers and bards learn new spells as part of their training time, and do not incur additional day unit costs.

BANNED SPELLS

There are some spells that are not suitable for PC use in the LIVING CITY Campaign environment, because they require campaign staff administration. The following spells are not available to for PCs to cast: *true resurrection* and *permanency*. These spells may be allowed through certain meta-campaign activities.

RESTRICTED SPELLS

There are three spells that has been deemed restricted by the LIVING CITY Campaign Staff.

The *wish* spell is allowed for PC use, under the following provisions: the only uses are those listed in the bullet points, as shown in the *Player's Handbook* listing of the spell, with two exceptions. 1- Any magic items created by the casting of this spell only exist for the adventure in which the spell was cast, and disappear when the game ends. 2- All castings of the *wish* spell that grant ability point increases must be cast through a

meta-campaign activity.

Miracle is restricted to the 1st three bullets in section 1 of the spell and the 3 bullet points in section 2 of the spell, as listed in the *Player's Handbook*.

Polymorph other effects end at the end of the adventure in which the spell was cast, and are not permanent.

CERTIFICATES

You will be issued certificates for things and favors that your character acquires during adventure play, during interactives, and through other means. These certificates include information on the item or favor that you will need in order to use it in play. Some specific sections of the certificate to note are:

Validation: Certificates must be signed in ink by the DUNGEON MASTER® who issues them, and the DUNGEON MASTER'S RPGA number must be completely legible. The name of the character the certificate is assigned to must be written in ink on the line provided at the top of the certificate.

No player may have, on any of his or her characters, any items from any scenario that the player has written.

USE RESTRICTION:

Use restriction is a category that describes how many of a certain certificate from a certain scenario a given character can be assigned. The categories are:

COMMON—A character can possess as many duplicates of this certificate as desired, provided they were all earned in play by some character.

UNUSUAL—A character can possess only one of these items.

RARE—Only one of these rare items may be used at a given table of players. If multiple characters bring this item, then only one "exists" for the adventure. Which of the duplicates exists must be determined at the start of the adventure, and may not be changed during the course of the adventure. Further, all rare items are also bound by the restrictions on unusual items.

UNIQUE—Only one of these exists in the campaign.

The categories apply by item and scenario name. For example, if your character happens to get item X from scenario A, and it is considered "unusual," then your character can own one of item X from scenario A. If item X comes out in scenario B later, you can collect one or more of those as well (depending on its restriction in scenario B), since the scenario name is different.

TRADE POLICY: Certificates indicate whether they can be traded between characters. If a certificate can be traded, and is traded, then a complete trade history must appear on the back of the certificate. The information for each trade must include the player name and RPGA number and character name of the person trading the item away and the person accepting the item, and the date of the trade. This all must be completely legible, and the history must show the progress of the certificate from the original owner (on the front) to the current owner. No player can trade item certificates between his or her own PCs, no matter by what means (including passing through several other characters' hands).

Certificates in the LIVING CITY campaign are the property of Wizards of the Coast, and must be returned to the campaign staff upon request. They have $0 cash value and cannot be sold for cash or other real world considerations.

LEAVING THE CAMPAIGN

Characters that reach 20th character level may not be played in the LIVING CITY campaign.

MAKING THINGS

Non-magical crafted items, as well as crafted potions and scrolls, do not require certificates. Make a logbook entry for the time spent, and have your game master sign it. Indicate when you use your crafted potion or scroll in the logbook entry where it is used, referencing the log entry for when it was created.

CRAFT ITEMS: Items made using the Craft skill cannot be sold to NPCs; they can only be saved for use by the maker, or sold to other PCs. Crafting an item takes time, as calculated using the formula in the *Player's Handbook*, with a minimum of 1 day unit. PCs may not craft items that are restricted from purchase in Step 5 of these guidelines.

BREW POTION: Creating a potion takes material resources (gold) and experience points as indicated in the *Player's Handbook*. Creating a potion costs 1 day unit, and only one potion may be created per adventure played. Potions created this way may not be traded, but may be given to other PCs to consume during an adventure.

SCRIBE SCROLL AND CAST RUNE: Creating a scroll or rune takes material resources (gold) and experience points as indicated in the *Player's Handbook* or *Forgotten Realms Guidelines*. The time to scribe a scroll should be calculated from the description in the Scribe Scroll Feat in the *Player's Handbook*. The minimum cost is 1 day unit, and always round up to the next whole day unit. Only one scroll can be scribed per adventure played. Scrolls and runes created this way may not be traded, but may be given to other PCs to use during an adventure.

OTHER MAGIC CREATION FEATS: Costs (in gold, experience points, and day units) for creating other magic items are covered on a case-by-case basis. These items require certificates, so though you may have the pre-requisites for making something (according to the rules in the *Player's Handbook* and

Dungeon Master's Guide) you must use the meta-campaign procedure for doing so.

ADDING NEW MATERIAL

The Campaign Staff understands that Wizards of the Coast is continually creating new additions to the D&D game and the FORGOTTEN REALMS setting. It is our desire to implement these additions as quickly as possible while maintaining the long-term playability of the campaign. With this in mind, we have developed a schedule for the implementation of new material into the campaign. All new material that the Campaign Staff deems is appropriate for the campaign will be summarized in this document. We are committed to updating this document with any new material information on the 1st Monday of every even-numbered month (Feb, Apr, June, Aug, Oct, Dec). If there is new information, the version number and date of this document will be changed. If there is no new information, only the date of this document will be changed. The Campaign Staff reserves the right to review all new material for a period of at least 6 months before making a decision on its suitability for use in the LIVING CITY Campaign.

GUIDELINES FOR ETHICAL PLAY

We expect that you will conduct yourself in a manner suitable to group cooperation and group enjoyment. Specifically,

PLAYERS

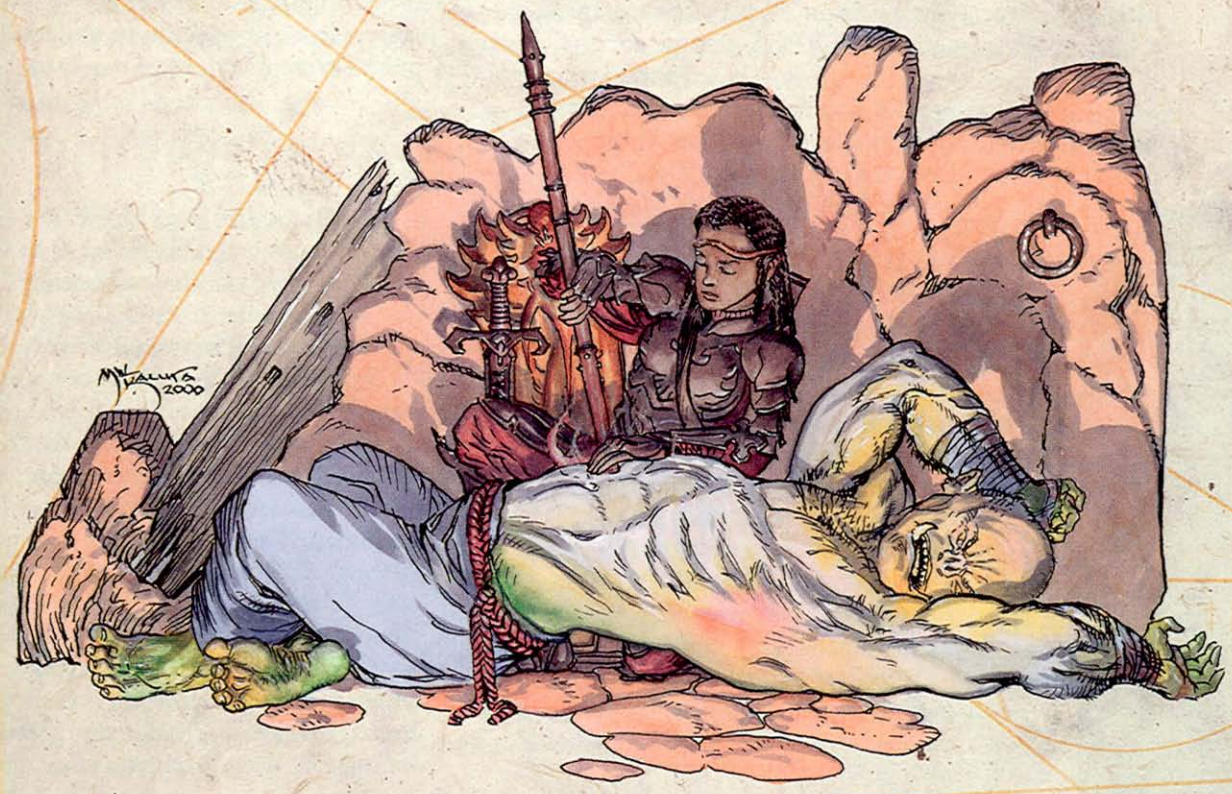
- Contribute to the fun of the whole group when playing. Don't play in a style that detracts from the fun of the game.
- Play fairly and honestly.
- Be considerate of others, and their right to enjoy the game as much as you do.
- Follow the spirit of the rules, as well as the letter of the rules.

DUNGEON MASTERS

- You are the DUNGEON MASTER. It is your job to run the game. You are not playing against the players. Their fun is your top priority.
- All players should be treated equally and equitably, by you and by other players.
- Run games in a professional manner. Remember that you represent the RPGA and the campaign to your players.
- Abide by the expectations that apply to the players.

ADMINISTRATION

- Respond and communicate in an articulate and timely manner.
- Uphold the authority of our game masters, and do not overrule them without careful investigation.
- Abide by the expectations that apply to players and DUNGEON MASTERS.



LIVING FORCE™

CHARACTER CREATION RULES

(Version 1.0, January 2001)

"Be mindful of the Living Force, my young Padawan"

The LIVING FORCE™ campaign takes place in the *STAR WARS* universe one year after the events of *The Phantom Menace*. Political fallout from the Trade Federation's actions on Naboo spreads through the galaxy, and the Republic begins to crumble. The campaign's "home base," the Cularin system, has just joined the Republic, but it must also face its own unique problems (see the forthcoming *Living Force Campaign Guide* for details).

Like the movies, the campaign is story-intensive. Story arcs take place in one-year periods. Each major story consists of three trilogies (three-part adventures), and one to three supplementary adventures. These adventures will be available for conventions before they're available for home game groups. You can play in the main stories of the campaign without leaving your home.

Supplemental campaign information will be released through the RPGA's *Polyhedron®* magazine, Wizards of the Coast's *STAR WARS Gamer* magazine, and on the RPGA website at www.rpga.com. These sources will provide additional material on the Cularin system and other systems in LIVING FORCE stories. The Force will be with us.

MAKING A CHARACTER

To make a LIVING FORCE character, you'll need a copy of the *STAR WARS Roleplaying Game* core rulebook. The guidelines below describe changes needed for a LIVING™ campaign environment. All LIVING FORCE characters must comply with the most current version of the *STAR WARS Roleplaying Game* core rules and these guidelines.

Instead of following the steps outlined below, you may select one of the Fast-Track Character Templates from the main rulebook. The templates are complete characters, so you can select one, name the character, skip to Step 6 below, and start playing. Character templates should not be modified. If you want a character that's slightly different from one of the templates, follow the instructions below instead.

STEP 1: ABILITY SCORES

Assign your ability scores using the planned character creation method on page 11 of the *STAR WARS Roleplaying Game* rulebook. You can also choose to use the standard score package described on that page. Apply species modifiers to ability points after the base scores are determined. Ability points gained from level advances do not use this chart. At every fourth character level, add one point to any one ability.

Because the LIVING FORCE campaign strives for a heroic feel, all characters add one ability point at second character level, in addition to the points acquired every fourth character level.

STEP 2: SPECIES AND CLASS

Choose a species for your character. The species presented below are allowed for LIVING FORCE characters. Other species are reserved for Gamemaster characters or have not yet been discovered by the galaxy at large during the era of the campaign.

STAR WARS Roleplaying Game rulebook: Human, Cerean, Gungan, Ithorian, Rodian, Sullustan, Trandoshan, Twi'lek, Wookiee.

LIVING FORCE Campaign Guide: Tarasin.

Choose any class for your character described in the *STAR WARS Roleplaying Game* rulebook.

Prestige Classes: Players may choose from the following prestige classes:

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bounty hunter, elite trooper, starfighter ace, and officer. Characters must qualify for these classes as described in the *Star Wars Roleplaying Game* rulebook.

Multiclass Restriction: In the Living Force campaign choosing the path of the Jedi requires complete devotion. Jedi consulars and Jedi guardians who add additional classes after taking up the Jedi class can never again advance as a Jedi, though they retain any Jedi class abilities they have already earned. If a character has fewer than seven levels in the Jedi class when he or she abandons it, the character loses the lightsaber acquired at the first Jedi class level. It must be returned to the character's master.

Step 3: Vitality Points

Living Force characters receive vitality points at each class level according to the table in the upper right corner. Add Constitution bonuses to the values in this table.

Step 4: Skills and Feats

Choose skills and feats for your character. The Profession and Craft skills are deliberately open-ended in the game rules, so these specific rules apply:

Profession and Craft skills do not add synergy skill bonuses to any other skill. Furthermore, Profession and Craft skills cannot be used in place of skills described in the *Star Wars Roleplaying Game* rulebook. For example, skill ranks in Profession (starship pilot) or Craft (starship) cannot help you make Pilot or Repair checks.

Profession and Craft skills can be used to generate income for your character. Because the campaign focuses on story elements, we have simplified the means of generating income, and there are rules for generating income between adventures. Profession and Craft skills can help boost your income when using these rules. You cannot use Profession or Craft skills to generate income by other means. Player characters can craft items from the equipment chapter of the *Star Wars Roleplaying Game* rulebook and sell them to other player characters. Characters cannot craft lightsabers (except as detailed below), ships, vehicles, or droids. It is best to derive income from the use of Craft and Profession skills in your character's background, rather than during adventures. (After all, did you see Han, Leia, or Obi-Wan stop in the middle of a movie to sell a suit of blast armor to their friends?)

Jedi characters (consulars and guardians) must craft their own lightsabers before reaching 7th level. Once the character reaches 6th level in a Jedi class, construction of a Jedi's lightsaber takes place "off-screen" (between adventures). When a Jedi makes his or her own lightsaber, the old lightsaber is returned to the academy.

Step 5: Equipment

Starting characters receive maximum credits for their class. Characters can purchase equipment listed in the Equipment chapter of the *Star Wars Roleplaying Game* rulebook.

Vitality Points

Force Adept	6
Fringer	6
Noble	4
Jedi Consular	6
Jedi Guardian	8
Scoundrel	4
Scout	6
Soldier	8

The following equipment is not allowed for player characters: double-bladed lightsabers, stormtrooper armor.

The following items are legally restricted: security toolkits, vibro-axes, heavy blaster pistols, any weapon in the heavy weapons group, and thermal detonators. Possession of this equipment is allowed, but characters cannot buy it through normal channels. Permits for these items may be available in play. Legal penalties will be applied during adventures to characters found possessing these items without proper permits.

Lightsabers are acquired in play or by class choice. They cannot be purchased.

Characters may not purchase vehicles, starships, or droids, except through play opportunities.

Keep track of how much your gear weighs. We don't usually worry about encumbrance, but if you pack an excessive amount of gear, you will find yourself slowed down.

Step 6: Background

Characters in the Living Force campaign are heroes, not villains. The adventures are centered around heroic experiences. Please do not play villainous characters.

Your character may be of any height or weight allowed for your species. Your character begins at any age between adulthood and old age, as defined in Chapter 6 of the *Star Wars Roleplaying Game* rulebook.

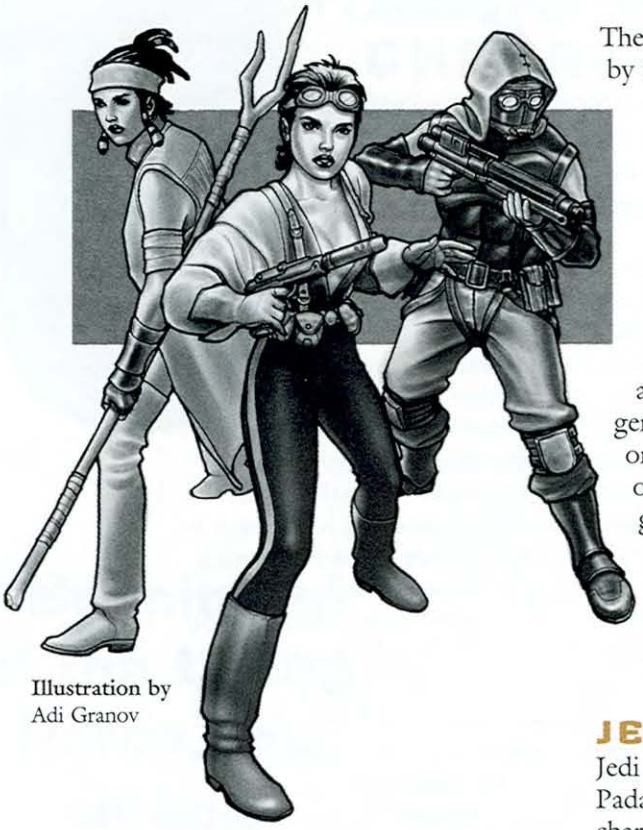


Illustration by
Adi Granov

You should determine your character's history up to this point, and you should be able to explain why he or she is in the Cularin system. Character concepts that do not fit this campaign should be avoided.

SPECIAL CHARACTER OPPORTUNITIES

GUILD-LEVEL™ and Family RPGA members have special options for their characters, as described below. To participate in these options, you must register your character either at an interactive convention event where these opportunities are present, or register online through our character database. If you don't have access to the Web, you can mail a copy of your character and your request to RPGA Network, Star Wars Character Option, P.O. Box 707, Renton WA 98057-0707 USA.

The opportunities are described by type, with notations for character classes that can take advantage of each one. Multiclassed characters can take advantage of any options for which any of their classes qualify, but each player can only make use of one of these options at a time. If a player has generated multiple characters, only one of them can use one of these options at any given time.

These opportunities should be used to encourage roleplaying during adventure play.

JEDI TRAINING

Jedi player characters begin as Padawan learners. Each character is assumed to have a mentor. Until a character becomes a 3rd-level Jedi guardian or consular, his or her mentor is generally assumed to be in the background, training the Padawan between adventures. The mentor can be contacted during adventures, but cannot directly participate. Jedi study as Padawan learners until they reach 7th level.

At the 3rd class level, the Jedi can declare a specific mentor. A Jedi Knight player character may volunteer to mentor the Padawan; otherwise, the Gamemaster plays the mentor. The relationship between the mentor and Padawan must be registered with the campaign staff. A mentor cannot train more than one Padawan.

Padawan learners with assigned mentors receive 125% of awarded experience points for any adventures played.

FORCE ADEPT APPRENTICES

Upon reaching the 3rd class level as a Force adept, a character can attract an apprentice to his or her interpretation of the Force. The apprentice begins as a commoner and adventures with the player character. After five completed adventures in which the Force adept character receives more than fifty percent of the possible experience available per character, the apprentice becomes a 1st-level Force adept. Thereafter, the apprentice acquires experience at the same rate as other characters, but cannot have more than half the class levels that the player character has as a Force adept (rounded down). Thus, a 3rd-level Force adept could have a 1st-level Force adept apprentice. If the same 3rd-level Force adept also had six levels of the scoundrel class, the character could still only have a 1st-level Force adept apprentice. The apprentice only gains levels as a Force adept. Once the apprentice reaches 7th level, he leaves the player character and strikes out on his own.

Regular reports on the apprentice must be submitted to the campaign staff. These reports should be sent when the apprentice reaches 1st level, and whenever the apprentice gains a level. When the apprentice leaves the player character, a full report should be made, so that the apprentice can be integrated into the campaign as a Gamemaster character.

CALLING IN EXCEPTIONAL FAVORS

Noble class characters can call upon favors as a class ability. In the LIVING FORCE campaign, certain classes of characters can

call upon exceptional favors of different types. All three kinds of favors described below should be governed using the general guidelines for noble favors (as described in the rulebook), with one difference: The DC for a favor should be cut in half.

These favors can be requested by characters of 3rd level and above. A single character can have one of these favors active at a time. The character must use the favor, and report the use and results to the campaign staff, before receiving another such favor (or any other special character option).

Use of these favors comes with a cost. The first time one of these favors is used, the character does not have to repay it. The second time one is used, the Gamemaster character granting the favor can request a favor in return, which the character must try to fulfill. Such a favor should depend on the context, the Gamemaster granting it, and the nature of the current adventure. The favor that the player character must grant should not be directly related to the adventure; in fact, it can be totally unrelated to the adventure. However, it must be something the character has the ability to grant.

Noble Exceptional Favor (Noble Class Only): Powerful Gamemaster characters in the campaign grant these favors. Examples include the Baron Administrators on Cularin, Nirama (a local crimelord), and Colonel Tramsig.

Scoundrel Illicit Goods Favor (Scoundrel Class Only): This favor is used to acquire a piece of illegal or restricted equipment for use during the adventure. Examples include heavy blaster rifles or thermal detonators for a demolitions or heavy combat mission, special tools for an infiltration mission, or a load of spice for a decoy mission of some kind. Its use should tie to an adventure; the favor cannot be used to enrich the scoundrel character. Whether the character can keep the piece of equipment or not depends on where it came from. In the report on the favor, the player should explain how and why the item was obtained, and the campaign staff will decide whether to certify it or not.

Fringer Extra-System Favor (Fringer Class Only): This favor can accomplish the same things that the noble or scoundrel versions can, but it is granted by the fringer's contact somewhere in the Outer Rim. Because the source is far away, the time elapsed between requesting the favor and receiving it depends on the nature of the favor. Information should take about a day to get back to the fringer, while a piece of equipment may take several days or weeks to be brought insystem.

SHIPS AND DROIDS

Acquisition of starships, vehicles, and droids is controlled by the campaign staff. Upon reaching 3rd level, a player may acquire a ship or droid for one of his or her characters. The ship or droid comes with a debt equal to its cost, which must be paid. Regular payments can be made (so a character can get a ship before being able to afford it), or the whole can be paid in a lump sum. If regular payments are not made, then thugs come to collect the credits owed each time the character is played in an adventure (these statistics will appear in an appendix at the end of each adventure). If payments are not made for a long enough period, the ship or droid is confiscated.

Once the ship or droid has been paid for, the character can make improvements (according to the rules presented in the *Star Wars Roleplaying Game* rulebook) at interactive events.

Heroes of the soldier class can purchase classification four droids, those armed and used for military applications. Characters of other classes can purchase only noncombat droids (classifications one, two, three, and five). Droids that are not classification four cannot be equipped with armaments.

Heroes of the scout class acquire their ships through more legitimate means, and therefore do not suffer the risk of visits from thugs. Scouts also get their ships at a discount.

Contact the Living Force staff via email at: <lfadmin@rpga.com>. For a detailed list of campaign staff members and the most recent version of these guidelines, point your browser to the Campaigns section of <www.rpga.com>.

illustration by Vince Locke

Way back in issue #141 of the US *Polyhedron*, we fondly remembered the *Fiend Folio*, an old First Edition D&D® monster book filled with some of the, uh, "most creative" monsters ever seen. Within the hallowed covers of that musty tome lurked such worthies as the tirapheg ("a tripedal hermaphrodite"), the sheet phantom (a haunting piece of laundry), and the gorbel (a two-armed, three-eye-stalked red rubber ball). While these beasties may not have conjured the most frightening images, they were good for a chuckle or two. But there was more to the *Fiend Folio*. The book also gave us the ultra-cool githyanki, dune stalker, and princes of elemental evil. Amid the goofy garbage could be found a whole lot of inspiration.

Thus was born the First Annual Fiend Folio Memorial Monster Creation Contest, an event we hope will make for a long-running feature here in *Polyhedron*. This year's entrants ranged from the lame "my monster is like a bugbear, but with longer hair" to the downright ludicrous (the living door, below, is probably the best example of this). If we've printed your monster blow, keep an eye on your mailbox. A copy of FORGOTTEN REALMS®: *Monsters of Faerun* is on the way. As a special treat, we've updated the Cifal, the *Fiend Folio* monster voted "suckiest" by the members, to the new D&D.

Will the beasts below live on to become integral parts of D&D history? Perhaps not, but you ought to get some good use out of them. Barring that, we hope they'll elicit a chuckle or two.

CIFAL

(based on the original *Fiend Folio* creature created by Oliver Charles MacDonald)

Huge Aberration
Hit Dice: 8d8+32 (68 hp)
Initiative: +1 (Dex)
Speed: 20 ft.
AC: 14 (-2 size, +1 Dex, +5 natural)
Attacks: slam +12
Damage: 1d6+12 slam
Face/Reach: 10 ft. by 10 ft./15 ft.
Special Attacks: Poison
Special Qualities: Semi-solid swarm, damage reduction 10/+1, darkvision 60 ft.
Saves: Fort +7, Ref +4, Will +7
Abilities: Str 26, Dex 12, Con 19, Int 2, Wis 9, Cha 9

Skills: Escape Artist +3, Climb +10, Jump +10
Feats: —

Climate/Terrain: Tropical to temperate deserts, forests, hills, plains, and underground
Organization: Singular swarm
Challenge Rating: 7
Treasure: None
Alignment: Always Neutral
Advancement: 9-16 HD (Huge); 17-32 (Gargantuan)

The Cifal is a natural puzzle, a mysterious agglomeration of thousands of insects that swarm together in a huge roughly humanoid shape. Speculation regarding the ecology of cifals abounds. Apparently composed of many different types of otherwise normal biting, stinging, and burrowing insects, the cifal seems to operate with a singular hive-mind. Originally thought to be a mythical horror, recent sightings on the outskirts of populated lands have proven the creatures' existence, as well as their ferocity when disturbed.

COMBAT

When disturbed or hungry, the cifal shambles toward any fleshy victim it can attack and devour. This swarm of death cannot be reasoned with, nor will it accept any quarter. At best, it leaves behind only the bones of its kills.

Attacks against a cifal damage the overall swarm (instead of its individual component creatures). When the cifal reaches 0 hit points, its composite swarms scatter.

Semi-solid swarm: The insects that give the cifal its bizarre humanoid form are packed together tighter than those conjured by the *summon swarm* spell. This allows the hive creature to attack with a slam. It may also engulf (grapple) an opponent. Engulfed victims who are pinned automatically suffer slam damage each round they remain pinned, as the cifal bites at their skin and forces insects into their mouths, ears, and noses. Spells such as *gust of wind* and *stinking cloud* do not disperse a cifal, but otherwise affect it in the standard manner. Opponents may move through the space occupied by a cifal, but suffer an attack of opportunity when doing so.

Poison (Ex): Each time the cifal makes a successful attack, multiple stinging insects poison the victim. These multiple bites have the effect of a single poison attack (DC 18, initial damage 1d4 Dex, secondary damage 1d4 Con).

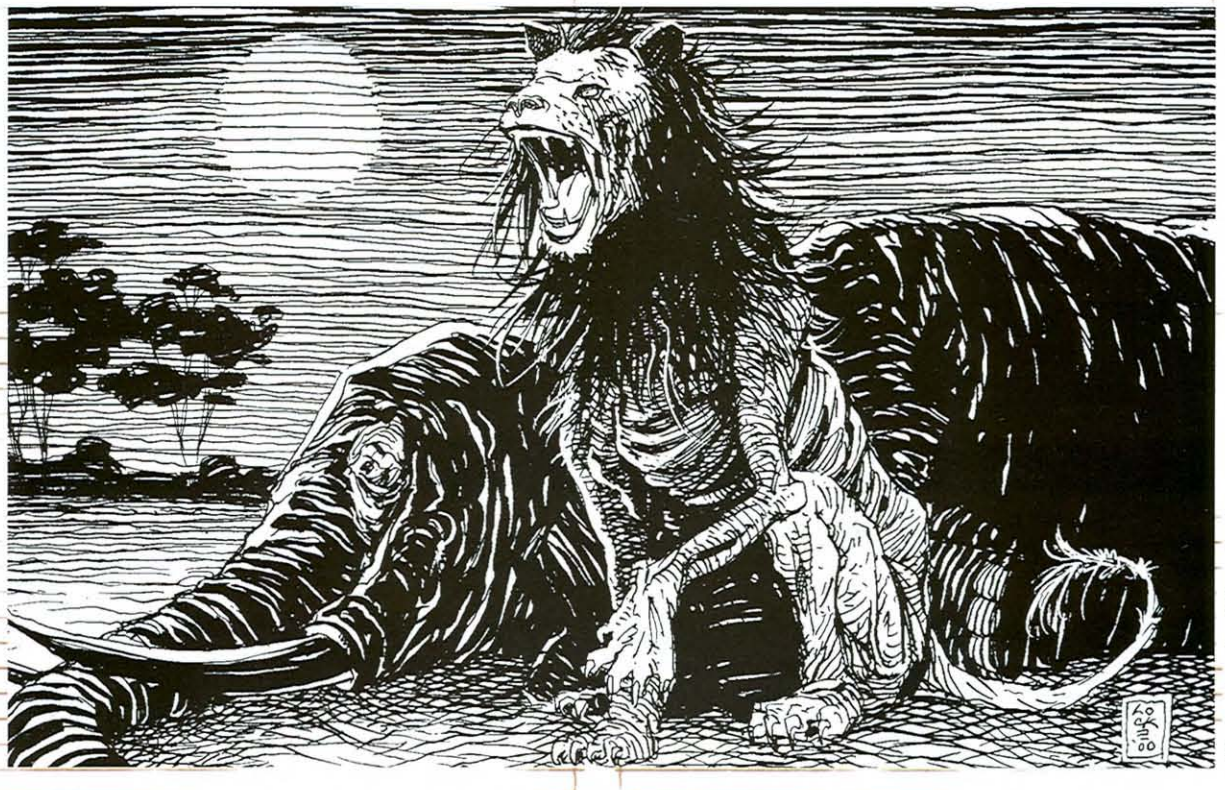


illustration by Vince Locke

DEATH LION

(by David Richards)

Large Undead
Hit Dice: 6d12 (39 hp)
Initiative: +2 (Dex)
Speed: 40 ft.
AC: 17 (-1 size, +2 Dex, +6 natural)
Attacks: 2 claws +8 melee, bite +5 melee
Damage: Claw 1d6+5, bite 1d8+2
Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 10 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Pounce, improved grab, rake, paralysis
Special Qualities: Undead, darkvision 60 ft,+2 turn resistance
Saves: Fort +2, Ref +4 (+2 base, +2 Dex), Will +6 (+5 base, +1 Wis)
Abilities: Str 21, Dex 15, Con —, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 14
Skills: Balance +6, Hide, Jump +10
Feats: Multiattack, Weapon Focus (claw)

Climate/Terrain: Any land or underground
Organization: Solitary or death's pride (2-4)
Challenge Rating: 5
Treasure: None
Alignment: Always neutral evil
Advancement: 7-18 HD (Huge)

Created by foul necromancy, death lions are charged with guarding and patrolling locations devoted to the dead. Some serve as protectors to temples devoted to gods of death, while others serve as guardians for powerful spell-casting undead lords. In either case they will tirelessly hunt down intruders and revel in the kill for its own sake rather than any need for sustenance. They follow the commands of their creators, but retain the intelligence of the fierce hunter they were, attacking with cunning and organization.

Emaciated and mottled, these creatures still look and move like the lions they once were. The process that creates these guardians shocks their manes deep black, which then become matted and tangled due to lack of grooming. The death lion's skin is gaunt and tawny, and their tongues and mouths dry to a sickly gray color and smell of rotten carrion. A death lion's roar is a raspy echoing and blood-chilling scream.

COMBAT

Death Lions are fearless in battle. They stalk and attack any who enter their territory and continue to pursue until the intruders are either dead or beyond their territorial limits (usually a quarter-mile radius from whatever the death lion is guarding).

Death lions attack with their razor sharp and blackened talons and teeth. Whenever possible they hide before they attack, pouncing upon their foe.

Pounce (Ex): If a death lion leaps upon a foe during the first round of combat, it can make a full attack even if it has already taken a move action.If a death lion pounces upon an opponent, it can rake.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, the death lion must hit with its bite attack, If it gets a hold, it can rake.

Rake (Ex): A death lion that gets a hold can make two rake attacks (+8 melee) with its hind legs for 1d6+2 damage each.

Paralysis (Ex): Those hit by the death lion's bite or claw must succeed at a Fortitude Save (DC 15) or be paralyzed for 1d6+4 minutes. Even elves are vulnerable to this paralysis.

IRON MAIDEN

(by Alexander H. MacLeod IV)

Huge Construct
Hit Dice: 6d10 (33 hp)
Initiative: +0
Speed: 20 ft. (can't run)
AC: 20 (-2 size, +12 natural)
Attacks: 2 slam, +7 melee
Damage: slam 1d8+7
Face/Reach: 10 ft. by 10 ft./15 ft.
Special Attacks: Improved grab, spiked death blow
Special Qualities: Construct, damage reduction 10/+1
Saves: Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +2
Abilities: Str 21, Dex 10, Con —, Int —, Wis 11, Cha 1

Climate/Terrain: Any land
Organization: Solitary or Pair (2)
Challenge Rating: 7
Treasure: None
Alignment: Always neutral
Advancement: 7-16 HD (Huge-Size), 17-18 HD (Gargantuan)

The iron maiden is a construct guardian appearing as a 16-foot or taller iron statue of a comely woman dressed in long flowing robes. Close examination (Search, DC 8) of this iron

illustration by Ted Beargeon

statue reveals a seam in the iron running from between the maiden's feet to her neckline. Of course, a person many never get close enough to examine it, as these constructs are usually programmed to attack any intruders.

COMBAT

Iron maidens can be programmed to attack in case of a general or specific circumstance. It could be as simple as "anyone entering this room" or as specific as "anyone who is an elf and grabs the longsword hanging on the west wall of the chamber." Once the attack criteria is met, the iron maiden attacks until destroyed or until its opponents are dead. It will attempt a spiked death blow whenever possible.

Construct: Immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, disease, and similar effects. Not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, energy drain, or death from massive damage.

Improved grab (Ex): To use this ability, the iron maiden must hit with both slam attacks. If it gets a hold, it can attack with a spiked death blow.

Spiked death blow (Ex): Once an opponent is grabbed, the iron maiden can open her chest and body to reveal a chamber of sharp spikes (similar to the torture device of the same name). Opening the chamber is a move-equivalent action. The iron maiden then spends her attack action attempting to push her opponent into the spiked chamber (grapple check). If successful her opponent automatically suffers 2d6+5 damage, and an additional 1d6+5 damage per round the opponent is trapped in the chamber. The only action the trapped opponent may take each round while trapped is to attempt an escape from the chamber (opposed grapple check). Allies of the trapped individual outside the iron maiden can attempt to assist in the escape (as per the cooperation rules in the *Player's Handbook*). An iron maiden will not willingly expel a trapped victim until it reaches 0 or fewer hit points, at which point she will take a full action coup de grace action to kill the opponent, and expel the creature the next round, which is a move-equivalent action. Only a single creature of Small or larger size fits within an Iron Maiden. Smaller creatures would fit inside, but suffer no damage when trapped.

LIVING DOOR

(by Bob Watson)

Large Construct
Hit Dice: 4d10 (22 hp)
Initiative: +0
Speed: 0 ft.
AC: 13 (-2 size, +5 natural)
Attacks: Bite + 6 melee, or Slam +6 melee
Damage: bite 1d4+4, slam 1d8+4
Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Grappling bite
Special Qualities: Construct, Damage reduction 5/+1
Saves: Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +1
Abilities: Str 18, Dex 11, Con —, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 15
Skills: Bluff +3
Climate/Terrain: Doorway (Underground)
Organization: Solitary
Challenge Rating: 1
Treasure: None
Alignment: Any
Advancement: 6-12 HD (Huge-size)

Created by strange and whimsical magics, the living door is an intelligent portal guardian. Almost any type of door can host this construct,

but all living doors feature a handle shaped like a humanoid face—the door's ring or knob is always the nose, and the lock is always the mouth. Depending upon the commands of its creator, if anyone other than the owner approaches the door it becomes aware and may scream a series of warnings, reprimands and curses, or await cautiously for the creature to examine the door. Upon examination, the door always seems locked. If those approaching the living door attempt to pick its lock, the door attacks.

Each door has its own personality, and most are quite quirky. While a living door can be of just about any alignment, by some strange effect of the magic that creates them, trap door varieties of living doors are almost always some sort of evil.

Living doors usually speak the native language of their creator.

COMBAT

These strange guardians can defend their doorways in equally strange ways. Opponents who attempt to bash in the door (as an iron door, DC 28), receive both a verbal reprimand and slam attacks as the door will quickly open and close, attempting to hit its opponent with its mass. Sneaking past this attack can be done with a readied action and a successful Dexterity or Tumbling check (DC 25). If anyone attempts to pick the living door's lock, it bites either the pick (the hardness of the pick is not a factor in the attack: picks usually have 2 hit points, 4 if masterwork), or the hand. If it successfully attacks the entire hand it attempts a grappling bite (see below). Some living doors will halt attack and allow opponents through their doorway if they lose more than half their hit points. Others fight to destruction.

Construct: Immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, disease, and similar effects. Not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, energy drain, or death from massive damage.

Grappling bite (Ex): With a successful bite attack the door may attempt to grapple the opponent's hand within its mouth. This provokes an attack of opportunity by the opponent, but unless he or she has the Ambidexterity feat, such an attack must be made with his or her off hand. The living door does not do additional bite damage each round it has its opponent grappled, but may swing itself open and closed, making a slam attack each round its opponent is grappled.

illustration by Ted Beargeon

A grappled opponent is caught by the door, but not technically pinned. He or she can make melee attacks on the door with his or her off hand. Other than the exceptions above, this attack follows the rules for grappling found in the *Player's Handbook*.

TAUTHAR

(by John Bacon)

Large Monstrous Humanoid
Hit Dice: 4d8+12 (30 hp)
Initiative: +5 (Dex, Improved Initiative)
Speed: 20 ft., fly 40 ft. (good)
AC: 14 (-1 size, +1 Dex, +4 natural)
Attacks: 2 claws +7 melee, 1 bite +2 melee
Damage: claws 1d6+4, bite 1d6+2
Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./10 ft.
Special Attacks: Rend 2d6+4
Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., shadowblur, shadow jump
Saves: Fort +7, Ref +5, Will +1
Abilities: Str 18, Dex 13, Con 16, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 6
Skills: Hide +4, Listen +4, Spot +4, Jump +9
Feats: Improved Initiative
Climate/Terrain: Mountrains
Organization: Solitary, ripple (2-5), hunting band (7-12), or colony (10-120)
Challenge Rating: 4
Treasure: normal
Alignment: usually neutral evil
Advancement: 5-12 HD (Huge-size)

These winged reptilian humanoids are masters of shadow manipulation. Using the shadows of night or those in dark caves they attack other humanoids (humans and savage goblinoids are their favorite meals) with stealth and speed.

Fond of heat, these creatures live in upper reaches of volcanic lava tubes, tropical ruins, or muggy caves. Tauthars usually hunt as they live—in packs. They hunt at night, and eat what they catch as soon as possible. They prefer their me at warm.

When not hunting, tauthars spend time in their cave lairs sleeping and worshiping a host of demon-lords, devils and evil gods.

COMBAT

When tauthars attack they always do so in numbers. A solitary tauthar tend to flee when it can. Hunting bands use their shadow jump (see below) ability to breach settlement walls and ship cabins in order to tear apart and consume

illustration by Ted Beargeon

unsuspecting and sleeping victims. They attack with both claws and sometimes a bite, attempting to rend their prey.

Rend (Ex): If a tauthar hits with both claw attacks, it latches onto the opponent's body and tears the flesh.
This attack automatically deals 2d6+4 points of damage.

Shadow Blur (Su): Tauthars receive one half-concealment (20% miss chance) when under the cover of darkness or shadow.

Shadow Jump (Sp): Three times a day a tauthar can *dimension door* from one shadow to another within the range of the spell (cast as an 8th-level sorcerer).

Illicit Wages at Blade's Point: D & D Brigands and Thugs

BY STEPHEN RADNEY-MACFARLAND ILLUSTRATIONS BY VINCE LOCKE

For such smelly and nasty looking cusses, orcs must have a good Public Relations person. Actually, they must have many of them—they have been the standard stock villains in D&D® since its introduction, and DMs around the world have drummed the evil beat of their savage song ad nauseum. It is a shame, really. These snout-nosed buggers can be boring adversaries.

At the other end of the spectrum, brigands and thugs are usually played consistently with one-dimensional villainy. These folks are the antitheses of Player Characters, using their powers and contacts for personal gain or twisted ends. Not motivated by strange and savage societal upbringing, brigands and thugs are the dark side of the adventure's reality. And more so than any grimy goblinoid, these folks have the potential to be the long-term foes of anyone who calls him or herself a hero.

Both the brigand and the thug have very real and historical aspects that you, the DM, can play upon. Taking a brief look at the anti-heroic traditions of each group will allow you to abstract the darkest and most loathsome points of each type of bad guy, and then challenge your PCs with villains in the garb of the mundane but packing some extraordinary punches. This article presents you with a primer of brigandage and thuggery. First in the historical perspective and then with some "crunchy bits;" tips on constructing your own dastardly bands, and brief and ready-to-play encounters complete with stats, history, motivation, common tactics and ideas for expansion.

We will start with the brigand—have at you!

BRIGANDS

I want all of Rome—all of the world— to know that I am justified in carving my way with the sword through this false and miserable world.
—Fra Monreale, c.1355

By all accounts Fra Monreale was a stunning sight as he stepped onto the block for his execution. Dressed in fine velvet trimmed with rich gold, he came prepared with his own surgeon to direct the executioner's axe. Monreale was an unsanctified prince of his day. A prior of the Knights of St. John, he commanded a free company—a brigand force—of thousands. With him came secretaries, accountants, and his own judges. He could command a price of over a hundred thousand gold florins for a single battle, and extorted as much from Italian city-states to ward off attacks.

Historically, mercenaries without a paycheck were brigands. The word comes from the Italian meaning, simply, "an armed company." These companies ravaged and burned where they went. Nothing or no one was spared from their greedy terrorizing—not the church, not the common folk, and not legitimate authority.

In your D&D campaign using brigand foes works best in lands that were recent battlegrounds. Armies, especially under the command of an evil or neutral warlord, tend to leave behind more expendable forces, not wanting to pay for their return, or lack the desire to house these rowdy forces within their own borders. Even the hasty retreat of good sovereigns can yield unsavory mercenaries in areas ripe for further pillage. These leftovers, caught in a foreign landscape, may accumulate power enough to continue terrorizing their neighbors even after the authorities catch wind of their atrocities. Given time some of these companies can make their own mark on the political landscape of a country.

If you decide to use a brigand force as a foe in your campaign, design your enemies with their background in mind. Brigand and blackguard were fairly synonymous terms in the Middle Ages, so that prestige class makes a good fit. After all, if you are stranded within an enemy's lands what better ally than one from the lower planes? A brigand band spawns apt pupils for demons drooling to wreak a bit of chaos in good lands, or for that spare devil to impose its version of the law. Due to the training involved for campaign soldiery, brigand bands will host members of the fighter class rather than

warriors, unlike typical bruisers or the local militia. With the training involved for campaign soldiery, members of the warrior NPC class are rarer within brigand groups than they are in, say, local militias. These folk either are the best at what they do, or they are food for the crows. The more successful a band is, the higher the chance they will have higher-level and specialized NPCs within their ranks—try challenging your players with a group of organized mounted brigands led by a cavalier (from the *Sword & Fist* Builder's Guidebook). Add a fire-wielding arcane spellcaster for ranged support to increase the level of challenge, and carnage. Fra Monreale took and entire army and bureaucracy with him on campaign. In D&D some of this translates into the Leadership feat, and, if that brigand leader was in, say, the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting, you bet he would chose a spellcaster as his cohort—preferably one who would make a treasure trove of magic weapons and augmentations.

Ready to make that brigand band to challenge your PCs? Once you have a good design for a brigand host and have done the math to determine Encounter Level, don't forget the last ingredient—motivation. More often than not brigands are used as the cardboard cut-out zrandom road encounter. Save that for those dull gray orcs. A couple minutes of thought about why the brigands are on the particular strip of road the PCs tread down, or their place in the political going-on within the realm they are in, can create wonderful plot hooks for later in the campaign. To illustrate my point, I present the Men of the Fox.

THE MEN OF THE FOX

During one particularly nasty war of succession the loosing faction hired a unit of mercenaries who became renown for their ruthless tactics. These men, led by a charismatic former knight named Thamlyn the Fox, used cunning and skullduggery to accomplish many victories for their employer. When their employer was vanquished, The Men of the Fox were clever enough to be nowhere near the field of defeat, allegedly stealing away in a holding controlled by a noble who, smartly, supported the winner outwardly while supplying arms and monies to the pretender. Still others say that they took to the forest, occupying some old ruined keep or former elvish enclave, gaining support here and there by this or that ambitious noble in return for their specialized service—assassination and stealth attack.

Some say the Men of the Fox are just the bogeymen of righteous nobles. More unscrupulous nobles know that they are the folks to hire to get rid of a pesky paladin or legitimate heir. The current organization of the band is a subject only to hushed guesswork. Many believe a half-fiend blackguard commands the band, a diabolical descendent of the original Thamlyn and a devil consort. Others are sure devils command the Men from foul pits.

TYPICAL MEN OF THE FOX KILL BAND (EL 8)

8 Men of the Fox Stalkers, mix male and female humans
Ftr2/Rog1: CR 3; Medium-Size Humanoid HD 1d6 + 2d10+3; hp 21; Init +7 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 18 (+3 Dex, +5 armor), Atk +5 melee (1d6+3/18-20, masterwork rapier) or +5 (1d4+2+poison/10-20, dagger), or +7 ranged (1d4+2+ poison/19-20 dagger); SA Rogue Sneak Attack +1d6; AL LE; SV Fort +4, Ref +5, Will +2; Str 14, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 13.
Skills and Feats: Bluff +4, Climb +6, Disable Device +8, Disguise +5, Hide +8, Move Silently +8, Open Lock +8, Read Lips +5, Spot +7; Dodge, Improved Initiative, Point Blank Shot, Weapon Focus (dagger).
Possessions: Chain shirt, buckler, masterwork rapier, 3 poisoned daggers (usually blue whinnis: DC 14, Initial Damage 1 Con, Secondary Damage unconsciousness; but sometimes Deathblade: DC 20, Initial Damage 1d6 Con, Secondary Damage 2d6 Con, for special missions—increase to EL 9).
Men of the Fox Deathblow, male or female human Ftr4/Rog2: CR 6; Medium-Size Humanoid HD 2d6 + 4d10+6; hp 40; Init +3 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 19 (+3 Dex, +6 armor), Atk +10 melee (1d8+6/x3, *battle axe +1*) or +8 (1d4+2+ poison/19-20, dagger), or +8 ranged (1d4+2+poison/19-20, dagger); SA Rogue Sneak Attack +1d6; SQ Evasion; AL LE; SV Fort +5, Ref +7, Will +1; Str 16, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 13.
Skills and Feats: Bluff +5, Climb +7, Disable Device +8, Disguise +8, Hide +8, Move Silently +8, Open Lock +8, Read Lips +5, Spot +7; Death Blow, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Power Attack,

Weapon Focus (battle axe), Weapon Specialization (battle axe).
Possessions: Chain shirt, *buckler +1*, *battle axe +1*, 3 poisoned daggers (usually blue whinnis: DC 14, Initial Damage 1 Con, Secondary Damage unconsciousness; but sometimes deathblade: DC 20, Initial Damage 1d6 Con, Secondary Damage 2d6 Con, for special missions—increase to EL 9).
Men of the Fox Arcane Support, male or female Rog1/Sor5: CR 6; Medium Size-Humanoid; HD 1d6 + 5d4; hp 21; Init +4 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (Dex, *ring of protection*), Atk +3 melee (1d4+2+poison/19-20, masterwork dagger), or +7 ranged (1d4+2+poison/19-20, dagger) or +6 ranged (1d8/19-20, light crossbow); AL LE; SV Fort +3, Ref +7, Will +5; Str 12, Dex 18, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 17.
Skills and Feats: Bluff +8, Concentration +9 (+13), Escape Artist +9, Hide +9, Move Silently +9, Open Locks +9, Read Lips +7, Spellcraft +7, Spot +6; Combat Casting, Dodge, Great Fortitude, Mobility.
Possessions: light crossbow, spell component pouch, 3 tanglefoot bags, *wand of charm person*, 5 *potions of cure light wounds*, *ring of protection +1*, 2 poisoned daggers (usually blue whinnis: DC 14, Initial Damage 1 Con, Secondary Damage unconsciousness; but sometimes Deathblade: DC 20, Initial Damage 1d6 Con, Secondary Damage 2d6 Con, for special missions—increase to EL 8)
Spells Known (6/7/5): 0—*detect magic*, *detect poison*, *disrupt undead*, *ghost sound*, *mage hand*, *open/close*; 1st—*mage armor*, *magic missile*, *obscuring mist*, *sleep*; 2nd—*cat's grace*, *scare*.

TACTICS

The Men of the Fox Kill Squad uses stealth and cunning to sneak upon their victims. Whether by way of Hide and Move Silently, or spells like *obscuring mist* or *invisibility*, these squads attempt to catch their victims flatfooted. Whenever possible the stalkers pair up to flank individual opponents to take advantage of Sneak Attack bonuses. The team's deathblow will pick off already wounded and troublesome (arcane spellcasting) PCs and dispatch fallen foes using their namesake feat (see *Sword & Fist* for details). These killers communicate via a set of mouthed and gestured commands, which is similar, though not as complex, as the silent language of the drow.

EXPANDING THE MEN OF THE FOX

The Men have higher-level spell casters and specialty troops to take care of powerful and pesky heroes and elite guards. Rumors abound that the organization sometimes summons both kytons and gelugons for extreme threats. As well, the organization is also home for a group of three assassins known only as the Three Fathers. These ex-priests of some exotic and evil deity are said to be masters of both disguise and hidden death.

THUGS

And it was even so; their graves had been dug while these unsuspecting travelers sat and conversed with us.—Ameer Ali c. 1835

The most misrepresented of human miscreants in the D&D game is the thug. This has to do with how the word came into the English language. When the British occupied India they heard extraordinary tales about a group of killers that slaughtered travelers. The tales were so wild, and the death tolls reported were so high, that British officials believed the these Thugee, as the murders were called, were nothing more than fantastic myth...until traveling British administrators and solders began to disappear—at which point the British government began to investigate. What they found was that the Thugee and their large death tolls were indeed very real, and began to take steps to bring these assassins to justice.

In 1839 a British military man, Philip Medows Taylor, wrote a book titled *Confessions of a Thug* detailing the novelized confession of one Ameer Ali, and shining the spotlight on these roadside killers. Because these Indians were devoted to the dark goddess Kali, and many Britons of the time considered Indians in dire need of culture and civilization, the Thug was portrayed as a dull and witless killer in popular culture. The thug in the D&D game has suffered from this historical occurrence; more often than not he is portrayed as the dumb bruiser who inhabits the seedy tavern.

The historical truth is that the thug was a terrifying foe, mixing the very worse aspects of bandit and assassin. They frequently organized into small cells whose members killed travelers between Indian settlements *en masse*. Ameer Ali admitted to committing "many hundreds of murders" himself in pursuit of religious mysticism and riches.

There are countless ways to accomplish the historical thug's type of terror in D&D. The assassin prestige class is an obvious choice, but there are many others. Mixing the rouge's sneak attack abilities with the adepts or clerics of unsavory religions also works well. Any evil deity that grants the Death domain is a boon to thugs. The mysteries of a thug need not be divine. Both sorcerers and monks make excellent thugs. The Scarlet Brotherhood in the GREYHAWK® setting is a very thuggish organization. Both of these classes have the ability to appear as unarmed and non-threatening folk until the PCs least expect it. Mix monks or rouges concealing their weapons with a group of arcane spellcasters heavy on enchantment and charm spells and watch out. Make that Will save, Mr. Half-orc barbarian!

The mystery of thug organizations should not be confined to the ability

of its spell casters. Foul motivations will make your thugs shine. Evil gods, interloping outer planar powers, or twisted and foul logic should push these killers into action.

THE GUILD OF BLADES

In many cities the Guild of Blades is an organization for swordsmen wishing to improve their prowess. The public face of the guild offers training in more exotic aspects of dueling and blade prowess. Many leaders consider these guilds a boon, and encourage their own soldiery to join. This is exactly what the guildmasters want. Their true goal is to infiltrate the powers that be so they can take steps to assure that these same authorities overlook or stay ignorant of the slave and contraband trade the guild espouses. Not only does trade in these items increase the coffers and prestige of the guild, but it also feeds a clandestine group of necromancers and transmuters (the true heart of the guild) with raw material for their twisted experiments.

Not all members of this guild know the organization's true purpose. As a person rises in rank within the guild he or she is taught more secrets of the guild. This process weeds out those who, while interested in sword training, may not hold the same ideals of the guild—progression in rank is often linked to trial by usually lethal combat.

Lower-ranking members of the guild usually are enlisted by masters for illicit guild business, coaxed by lies or coin, and told little of the mission's true meaning.

GUILD OF BLADES SWEEPER SQUAD (EL 7)

4 Guild of Blades Journeymen, male or female human Ftr3: CR 3; Medium-Size Humanoid; HD 3d10+6+3; hp 31; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 19 (+3 Dex, +6 armor); Atk +8 melee (1d8+3/19-20, masterwork longsword) or +6 melee (1d4+3/19-20, dagger), or +7 ranged (1d4+3/19-20, dagger); AL N; SV Fort +6, Ref +4, Will +1; Str 16, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 11.

Skills and Feats: Balance *+5*, Jump +7, Ride +7, Swim +7, Tumble +6; Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Toughness, Quick Draw, Weapon Focus (longsword).

Possessions: breastplate, small steel shield, longsword, dagger, 4 thunderstones.

Guild of Blades Journeyman male or female human Ftr4/Rog2: CR 6; Medium-Size Humanoid; HD 2d6 + 4d10+6; hp 36; Init +3 (Dex,); Spd 30 ft.; AC 21 (+3 Dex, +6 armor, +1 natural); Atk +11 melee (1d10+6/x3, masterwork mercurial longsword) or +9 melee (1d4+4/19-20, triple dagger); AL NE; SV Fort +4, Ref +5, Will +2; Str 18, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 13.

Skills and Feats: Balance +9, Climb +9, Escape Artist +7, Intimidate+7, Jump +9, Perform +5, Ride +11, Swim +9, Tumble +10; Combat Reflexes, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (mercurial longsword), Expertise, Improved Disarm, Weapon Focus (mercurial longsword), Weapon Specialization (mercurial longsword).

Possessions: *+1 breastplate*, masterwork mercurial longsword (see *Sword & Fist*), triple dagger, *amulet of natural armor +1.*

TACTICS

Attackers for the Guild typically will be in positions of local authority and approach their foes in that capacity. They may bring the PCs in for questioning, or lure them into a dark ally to talk about "city business," and then spring their attack. Depending on the level of the threat (and their orders) they may attack to kill, or want to bring at least some of their foes in alive. Many higher ranked Guildsmen are members of the duelist prestige class (also from *Sword & Fist*), as duelist training is one of the perks of membership.

If defeated Guildsmen are questioned later they will give false (but what they believe to be true) reasons for the attack.

EXPANDING THE GUILD OF BLADES

These foes can have mage support when the need arises. The organization sports many fighter/rogues, as guild specialists often teach apprentices to their mage masters the finer arts of swordplay. The secret wizard masters of the guild usually pick the cream of the sword-wielder crop as bodyguards, as well as undead and abomination minions for added combat and guard support. There is some whispering in the upper guild echelons that the guild's wizard masters are in turn controlled by beholder hivemasters who buy many of the slaves and illicit trade goods, or by a strange and organized fellowship of evil dragons, depending on the teller.

You Rogues Want Some More?

FURTHER IDEAS FOR THE ETHICALLY CHALLENGED

BY MATT BREBNER ILLUSTRATIONS BY TED BEARGEON

This article presents nine additional ideas for missiles, devices and nasty surprises usable by rogues (or any character with the inclination to try them) as a follow-up to the article "You Rogue! 13 Ideas for Those of Thiefly Bent," published in *Polyhedron* #142.

IDEAS FOR MISSILES

DETECTION BOMBS

These are good for locating invisible opponents once your party has run out of its usual gamut of detection spells. Get that local potter to make some hollow, fist-sized clay grenades prior to the mission and fill them with a mixture of fine flour, sand and sifted ash.

Hurl one against the ceiling and it should rain down over a sizeable area—your DM might allow a 10x10 cube or a 5x15 cone—to reveal the outline of any hidden or invisible creatures, making it possible to attack them until the flour falls or blows off. The flour will provide a white silhouette over most surfaces, while the quick-falling sand blinds upward-looking opponents. Both should also help reveal footprints when your invisible opponents make a run for it, thus making them subject to tracking. The fine ash adds to the coating and may also cause blindness, sneezing and coughing (Fortitude save DC 10 or suffer the same effects as the *daze* spell). The ash may have the added effect of providing a wispy suspension that betrays invisible movement through it as it descends (+5 circumstance bonus to spot invisible creatures attempting to move through the floating mess).

INCENDIARY BOMBS

A flask of lamp oil combines nicely with *fire seed* acorn grenades (see the 6th Level spell) to create a more effective incendiary grenade. The range increment for this concoction is 10 ft. and the bombs do 1d6 points of damage (in addition to the damage from the *fire seed* acorn grenade) during the first round to any creature within 10 ft. of the strike area. Unlike an oil flask grenade primed with a fuse, these bombs have no chance of failing to ignite. Anyone in the area after the first round must make a Reflex save (DC 15) or catch on fire per the rules in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. Keeping the acorn stable until the bomb is thrown is a simple matter of holding the acorn in place inside the flask with a blob of sealing wax (bearing an impression of your holy symbol or signet ring, of course, for a classy touch).

BLOWPIPE DARTS

Speaking of hot wax. . . . The next time your rogue discovers and disarms a poisoned needle trap, add the needle to the tip of a blow dart with a dab of wax and a few windings of fine thread. A pre-drilled cork tip should cap the dart safely for storage without removing the venom. Just remember to uncap it before shooting, or your enemies will be more annoyed than dead.

BROWN MOLD BOMB

Harvest some brown mold into a grenade flask while under the influence of a *control plants* spell, or while wearing that handy *ring of warmth*. Brown mold inflicts 3d6 points of cold subdual damage on any warm-blooded creature within 5 ft., and fire brought within the same area will cause it to instantly double in size. The bandits you've been tracking through the woods are gathered around a warming bonfire? Brown mold bombs should be just the trick.

These bombs also make for great booby traps near doors. A well-timed *shatter* spell from your spell-caster will release the mold on torch-bearing intruders or pursuers—guaranteed to help them chill out in a hurry.

HYPODERMIC PROJECTILES

This one involves some real teamwork and an approachable DM.

Step 1: Get your party archer, crossbowman, or dagger-lover to design their own simple "plunger" heads for arrows, bolts or handblades that converts them into hypodermic projectiles.

Step 2: Find craftsmen who can create these new weapons according to the designs—this is likely to prove costly and/or difficult, but that's innovation for you.

Step 3: Convince the resident druid or ranger to cast *summon nature's ally*, and produce a tiny (or larger) viper. Use speak with animals, possibly in conjunction with a *ring of animal friendship*, and ask if the snake will allow you to milk its venom (possibly offer it a nice fat mouse as a bribe).

Step 4: Store the venom in a corked glass vial.

Step 5: Load the preserved venom into the hypodermic projectiles mentioned above, using an appropriate means to seal the business end (there's that handy sealing wax or cork tip again) and prevent any leaks.

Step 6: Use as appropriate.

DIVERSIONS AND DELAYS

DELAYED-ACTION FIREBOMB

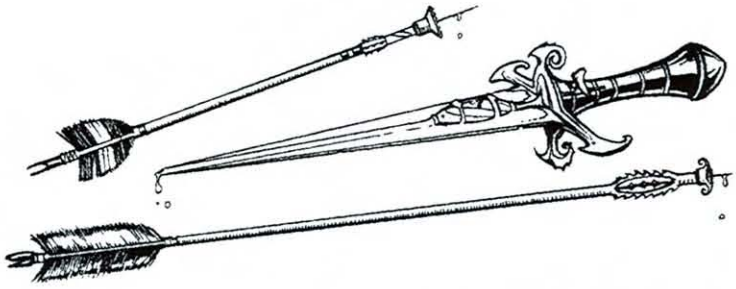
The humble hourcandle can act as a precisely timed fuse when coupled with a vase of lamp oil. The candle, trimmed to the appropriate length, acts as a stopper for the flask and has a wick at both ends. The lower wick extends into the oil beneath. Air holes in the neck of the vase allow the whole container to ignite when the last piece of flaming wick drops through. Masquerading as a normal candle lamp, or even as an ornament, this device can produce a fiery diversion at a pre-arranged time, and may just ignite some pesky foes.

BUTTERFINGERS!

Here's use #1002 for that flask of *oil of slipperiness* that's been burning a hole in your backpack. If you're fleeing from foes bearing weapons, smear some of the oil on a couple of those non-magical weapons parties always carry for when their mega-weapons are lost, or the occasional rust monster shows up. A *light* spell cast on them adds an attractive aura (gosh, could these be *magical*?). A few coins, cheap gems and a torn sack add to the illusion that a panicked party has dropped some of their valuable belongings. Any foe who does not require daily watering should at least be *tempted* to pick these items up, instantly smearing their weapon hand with oil. Not only will the discarded item be useless, but your foes will be unable to handle their own weapons properly again until they have washed off the oil with alcohol, something not always readily available during headlong pursuit.

A forward-planning party should always carry some such "accidentally dropped" treasure, ready to leave at the feet of pursuers. Sacks of coins and gems with contact poison on them work well, as do empty *fire trapped* scroll cases.

The best "dropped item" tactic I've seen was a string of 50 magnificent pearls—fake, of course, except for the smallest three at one end—with the clasp loosely threaded at the other end. When picked up by a triumphant ogre, the 47 fake pearls instantly fell off the thread, and were pounced upon by the ogre and his orc companions. They forgot the fleeing low-level PCs for five rounds while the ogre pounded his seniority into the orcs.



COIN-TROPS

While on the subject of deadly treasure, you should save a few poison-coated coppers as a different kind of investment for the future. Find an obliging smith to make four cuts in each coin, creating 'leaves' that can be bent in four directions like a typical caltrop. File one edge of each leaf and you will have a caltrop that lands with one poisoned blade uppermost every time. Naturally, storage and dispersal requires a special pouch and glove.

WHAT THE HECK?

This is really a desperate measure, but the unexpected, however harmless, can sometimes be just as diverting as the genuinely dangerous. Remember the first item, that flour-laden detection bomb? Take your boot off, uncork the bomb and sprinkle some of its contents on your bare foot. Then stamp a single white footprint on the wall beside a door or portal where you want to give a foe reason to pause. A handprint or flour glyph can also do the trick. It's utterly foolish and harmless, but intelligent foes can't miss it, and will no doubt ask themselves "what the hell does it *mean*?" Even if it causes only one round hesitation it can be the difference between life or death if it offers you one free shot, the chance to complete a spell, or the element of surprise in a desperate ambush.

Final note: These ideas are intended as examples to encourage the reader's own devious machinations. As always, consult with the DM, preferably prior to play. Most will appreciate a bit of inventiveness, especially when it comes in the form of a surreptitious note passed over the screen as the players prepare for a session. It not only adds to the enjoyment of the game, but it gives the DM the chance to make some unusual judgement calls.

Best of luck, you rogues!

THE PEARLS AND PITFALLS OF CONVENTION HITCHHIKING

by Lisa Gordon

Until July 1998, the RPGA presence in the US Pacific Northwest was a silent and unknown thing. Even though many within the region had paid memberships, we had no public face. No one really knew that many others lurked out there; thus every one sat quietly in their own basements playing the same old games with the same old people. Now, only two-and-a-half years later, it is difficult to go to any of the local gaming stores without finding some tell-tale sign of the RPGA.

Now every weekend is saturated with local RPGA game days. With a little effort, and a little gas money, one could hit at least fifteen different slots during any given month. Additionally, this year alone, more than sixteen full-scale events brought in players from around the region and ran enough tables to classify as conventions. Some were local gaming conventions that offered many different types of games; some were local science fiction or fantasy conventions that included some gaming tracks and a few were nothing but large-scale and elaborate game days.

Convention-size events provide the best opportunities to generate interest in the RPGA and lure in more players. Conventions are the pearls of RPGA gaming. With careful scheduling and diverse gaming choices, a large number of participants can be entertained and drawn into the fold—never to escape. The easiest way to get RPGA activity hopping in your area is to find a local established convention and catch a ride on its coattails. Sound simple? It's not. The truth is that the challenges encountered are just different, not fewer, than those associated with organizing smaller events.

The pearls of such a latching-on should be obvious. Most conventions already have a sizeable base of regular attendees. The communication structures and programs that existing conventions already have in place make it easier to advertise RPGA convention events, share ideas and coordinate the games. Many conventions have pre-existing mailing lists, Web sites, and monthly progress reports you'll be able to use to get the word out. More importantly, well-established conventions have already taken care of the nuts and bolts of running a convention. Your regional science fiction and game conventions have already negotiated decent rates at hotels, which allow for activities to take place all weekend long and late into the night, as gamers are wont to do.

Hooking up with an established convention is not always easy. Many types of conventions exist and deciding which types to latch onto is crucial. Universities and colleges sometimes hold free gaming conventions, but have limited facilities and advertising. Science fiction and fantasy conventions draw in the largest crowds, but the interests of their participants vary. Other local gaming conventions with paid attendance will have smaller crowds, but more of the folks attending will have interest in RPGA games. Although they draw many of the same people as the other conventions, comic book and media conventions focus more on the phenomenon of fandom, where members congregate around pros and guests, and games get little play. Large-scale science fiction and fantasy conventions or the stray game convention are your best options.

Once you've chosen which convention you'll partner with, the next step can determine the success of the RPGA events at the convention—finding the right person within the existing convention hierarchy as a contact. The best-laid plans of an RPGA coordinator can go astray with just one small bit of information overlooked or left out. Allow me to enlighten you with some real-life examples:

At one of last year's local conventions a helpful gaming organizer informed the RPGA coordinator that two gaming rooms would be set up with three tables each. Great! Six tables throughout a weekend can yield a great first-time convention turnout.

Always plan ahead to avoid mid-convention frustrations.

Unfortunately these two rooms translated to two standard-size hotel rooms with the beds removed and oversized tables shoved in. After adding chairs, the room left for players was miniscule. To make matters worse, the RPGA had to share the space with independent folk, and one company rep running games. We all got to know each other well that weekend!

Another local RPGA game coordinator found a very helpful and efficient contact at another local convention, and prepared over 30 slots for a full weekend. The judges were lined up. The scenarios were properly prepped. Prizes were ordered. Everything the convention contact had promised was fulfilled. The room was huge, the tables plentiful, and the signage abundant. Unfortunately this convention had just been born into the world and attracted only 150 people, total. Even if every single con-goer had come to play RPGs (and they hadn't) the gaming opportunities still outnumbered the potential players by far.

Be wary of someone who seems to know a little bit about a lot of aspects of the convention; likewise, be wary of someone who seems to know a lot about only their own small corner of the convention. They may be enthusiastic, but their enthusiasm may have real limitations.

Such misunderstandings represent a minor portion of the myriad problems that can plague RPGA events run within the structure of another organization's convention. The RPGA clubs of the Pacific Northwest have explored every challenge that exists within this dynamic—albeit mostly in hindsight. It all boils down to effective communication. A coordinator must accurately share the exuberance, the orderly chaos and sheer number of players that the RPGA will bring to the proceedings. A coordinator must also understand the twisted point of view that convention committees develop after spending months trying to balance all manners of interests on a shoestring budget. Despite even the best efforts, pitfalls loom before the coordinator.

PITFALL: SPACE

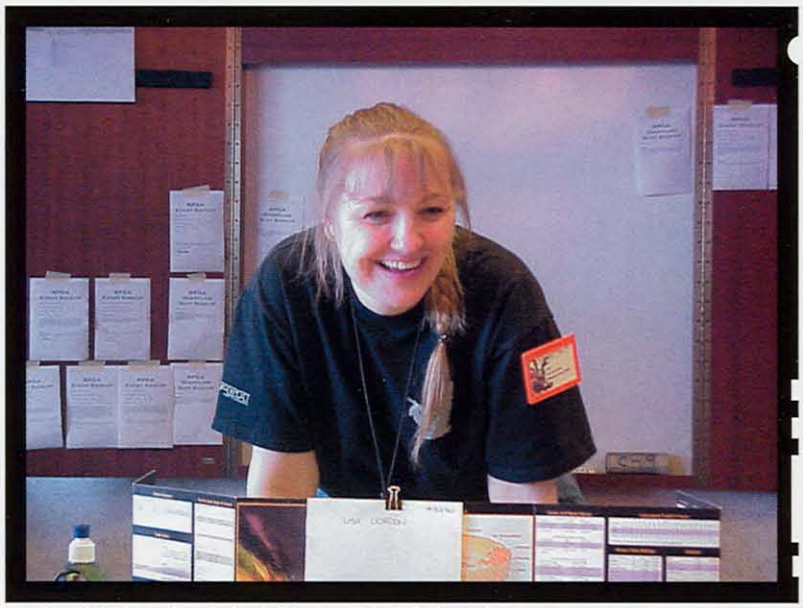
As a rule, multi-genre conventions provide a nice gaming room with six to ten tables spread about to allow for spontaneous free-form gaming. Gaming conventions obtain small, separate rooms that make excellent gaming areas, but tend to fill most of those rooms with their own programming. Often overlooked, the space required for mustering needs consideration. Until recently, no one in the Pacific Northwest had ever imagined, much less witnessed, approximately 75 people standing around in small elevator lobby while a loud blonde shuttled off 11 full tables to play where only five single-table rooms had been set aside. A coordinator must know precisely

Remember to provide enough space for your gathering!

what space will be available and must be able to explain repeatedly why it will not be enough.

PITFALL: RESOURCE UTILIZATION

All conventions attempt to cater to as many of their paying members as they can. This can lead to the inclusion of many different programming options, from anime to gaming to dances and parties. Balancing such varied types of programming often falls to an individual who can create exciting Excel spreadsheets, but understands little of the intricate requirements of each participant. In cases such as this, an RPGA coordinator who demonstrates good organization and responsibility may very well find themselves left to their own devices. At the largest science fiction and fantasy convention in the Northwest, this approach would have worked wonderfully if all the other gaming organizations and free-form gaming had not been given the same latitude. Each group had plans to use the available space and the offered resources. Most of the time, that space and those resources overlapped. At another convention, a coordinator prepared sign up forms, posted schedules, announcement posters, and flyers for supporting clubs. The information table the convention provided was a bulletin board plastered with everything from room party advertisements to personal notes looking for long lost friends. Most of the information the coordinator had brought ended up as scratch paper for rolling up a last-minute character.



Careful planning helped Lisa avoid pitfalls at Norwescon.

PITFALL: ADVERTISING

Theoretically, the convention is a bonus to the RPGA players as it offers more for their attendance dollar than just games. Also theoretically, the presence of RPGA scenarios is a bonus to regular convention-goers as it offers terrific gaming. Logically, it would behoove both the RPGA coordinator and the convention committee to mention or advertise the other's benefits. So do that. But know this, most everybody today is inundated with e-mails and Web site links. Even when the message is short and concise, readers remember only the parts that interest them. After an advertising push via several Web sites, many discussion lists, a few flyers and lots of word-of-mouth, one coordinator still wonders how so many players seemed to have missed the fact that the convention they all attended included a casino, a masquerade, and about 800 other people.

PITFALL: CONVENTION ADMISSION COSTS

Convention organizers offer a wide variety of programming to generate interest and income. Hopefully the RPGA games will tempt new people to play and even join the RPGA. The games also will bring in the regular RPGA players, where they could potentially discover new hobbies or interests amongst all that the convention has to offer.

Unfortunately, this is rarely the case. With the grandest aspirations one convention coordinator convinced about 40 of her closest RPGA friends to pay full admission to a convention where most of them stayed for thirteen hours, which was just enough time to play three games. With most Game Days and other gaming opportunities costing nothing or next to nothing, conventions can seem pretentious and uninviting.

PITFALL: RESPECT

This summer, the RPGA attended the main gaming

convention in the Pacific Northwest for the second time. The coordinator made several attempts to contact the correct personnel, and at times, any personnel within the convention hierarchy. Despite that, he almost did not get any space or time because the convention claimed that they had not been contacted in a timely manner, and through the right channels. The coordinator explained that they planned over 128 hours of judging, but was given only 10 free admissions while all other players, helpers, and judges had to pay the full $40 admission price. The coordinator made clear the interest that LIVING GREYHAWK™ would generate. The coordinator clearly indicated what events were scheduled; what amount of additional gaming could be thrown together easily; and a rough idea of even more games that might be needed and could be accommodated. This coordinator was given five rooms overall, yet on the main day of the convention between, 2:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m., more than a third of all convention attendees were playing RPGA scenarios. The frustrating task of convincing convention organizers that value is being added to their conventions by far outweighs all the other pitfalls and troubles the coordinator can face.

Find a decent convention to enhance with the excitement of RPGA gaming. Find a contact within the convention structure that demonstrates a true understanding of what is needed and can effectively share that with the rest of the convention organizers. Estimate the players who will attend, taking into account how effective the convention will be at generating new players for the RPGA events and also how much the convention attendance fees and other costs will deter the core groups of players. Recognize that convention committees see RPGA scenarios as just one of the many programming options that they offer to their members. Demand respect for the value that RPGA events add to conventions. Many fans will attend for no other reason than the RPGA presence. RPGA judges will provide hours of entertainment to other paying attendees. Much time and energy are spent both prior to and at the actual convention organizing a viable schedule, coordinating players, and preparing scenarios and judges. Time and money are spent preparing information packets for players, printing scenarios and handouts, and obtaining worthwhile prizes. Respect from the convention organizers will remain elusive, but is a major key to success.

Perhaps the rapid-fire method of growth that the Pacific Northwest used to infiltrate the convention circuit has bewildered some; perhaps it has frightened others. When the RPGA is unknown in an area some hesitation can be expected from others, but even once it has been established that literally hundreds of people will want to play the games, conventions are resistant to acknowledge the bonus that the RPGA events represent. If bringing the RPGA out to as many new players as possible, while still maintaining the current members' interest is the goal, latch onto a convention. It works. But be wary and get every single statistic available on those who played. Find out what they paid to play, why they came and how much they loved the RPGA events. If this information is not enough to bring convention organizers around to a more cooperative way of looking at things, go out and start a convention without them. But that's an entirely different can of worms.... ◆

PULLING THE PEARLS FROM THE PITFALLS

Pick a Good Convention

- Try large, multi-interest science fiction and fantasy conventions.
- Try university or college student game fairs.
- Try local gaming conventions.

Find a Contact and Communicate Effectively

- Explain what the RPGA can bring to the convention.
- Understand what conventions can provide.
- Double-check everything. Trust no one.

Estimate Attendance

- Consider how effective the convention will be at getting new players.
- Consider how other convention attendees could affect core group of players.

Earn and Insist upon Respect from the Convention

- Some RPGA members will pay for convention attendance solely for the games.
- RPGA judges will spend hundreds of hours entertaining paying convention-goers.
- Time and energy will be spent to organize more than 25 gaming slots.
- Time and money will be spent to gather information and prizes.

A WAYFARERS GUIDE TO THE FORGOTTEN REALMS®

BY ED GREENWOOD

I never thought I'd find myself in such a place as this, and I daresay most of us who dwell in Oparl would say the same, if you somehow managed to catch them speaking truth and not spouting hauteur—but then, I suppose a beggar in a gutter, or a prisoner starving in manacles in a dungeon, could use the same words with as much right, and as fittingly. Strange how the gods weave with and on us all, isn't it?

Jasiira Haulipat
Adventuress-Royal of Oparl
In conversation with Volo
Year of the Arch

Our tour this month takes a last look around the curious town of Oparl, luxurious (some would say decadent) capital of Bedorn.

NOR INN, NOR SHOP

At the center of Oparl is a huge circular cobbled area enclosing a horsepond. This cobbled "square" is large enough to camp a caravan (something *not* allowed), whelm army units in formation, or—its usual use—for nobles at play in beast-drawn conveyances to wheel grandly around, waving, blowing trumpets, and cracking their whips.

There are water-pumps and horse troughs at various points around the ornamental walls that separate the square from a quiet, tree-shaded circular drive that encircles it, visiting the fronts of the surrounding stately homes. Noble children at play often fill the troughs with glowfish or other aquatic pets.

Four grand, wide streets emerge from the square at its four compass points, and then curve in grand sweeps through the manicured countryside, dividing the grounds of one mansion from another. No Oparlan street bears a name; locals give directions by means of the estates (though at most, a stranger will search in vain for any identifying signboard).

The titles of Oparlan estates reflect the whimsy or pomposity of their owners, and include: Blackrise; Cortyn's Castle; Downdazzlegates; Evenglimmer House; Firetrumpet Towers; Gornpipes; Horyn Tower; Ivinder's Rest; Jelfintower; Last Lance; Mother's Cloak; Narnorn House; Olonadarr Castle; Pelnkeep; Raethstorm Castle; Satyr Knoll; Skelngate; Sornwood; Tasideeur Turrets; White Charger's Rest; and Zardazelda's Bower.

It is important to remember, when one visits Oparl, that nothing is as nature left it, and nothing is "forgotten and overgrown" or situated as it is by accident. Everything, no matter how ruined it may appear, has been built and kept that way for a purpose—even if for nothing more than to please the eye of a gem-drenched matron who likes to look out over ruins and reflect that she's outlasted *something*.

Many "wild" shrubberies conceal pumphouses or privies; almost every tall tree survives because it frames, rather than blocks, a pleasing vista from a window nearby. Owners who dislike seeing servants carrying refuse through their "wild" grounds dig service tunnels linking their houses with slowly-filling garbage cellars or pits. A gnome team brought in to "fix" cellar flooding once discovered a garbage cavern stuffed with valuable furnishings of exotic woods, sculpted metals, and gems—all with minor scratches or breaks. That owner wanted never again to see anything she knew had been marred, and her servants could not bear to burn such wealth.

Visitors to Oparl may rapidly discover more about the square. If they offer fire, word, or threats, or try to camp, they'll see firsthand that the square's encircling walls animate as stone golems to clear away the unwanted at the behest of unseen nobles, peering from their high turrets and windows.

More peaceable visitors will discover that Oparl offers not a single place for visitors to stay or dine in. Public privies are artfully concealed in the end-bastions of the square's ring-wall, their doors opening onto the four lanes as they meet the square, but these were intended for the use of grooms, hostlers, outriders and gardeners rather than for passing strangers. There's not a single inn, tavern, eatery, or shop in the streets of Oparl, or visible from it.

NOR WELCOME, EITHER

A lone walker, or perhaps as many as three travelers afoot, who stay quiet and keep away from the square and as close to cover as possible, may be tolerated to sleep a night in the open in Oparl. Not so larger groups, anyone riding or leading a beast—or the traveler who openly uses magic or wears full metal armor.

Plate-armored guards will boil forth from a nearby estate

gate, never less than a dozen strong, and often bolstered by minor mages or trained, loyal monsters. Led by officers wielding battle-wands or other magics, they'll order the travelers to move on, and in manner will be cool, brisk, and inflexible. Even injured persons will be moved away from Oparl, usually to the first hollow along the lane north out of town, where there's a stream of drinkable water.

The guards may give needy or distressed travelers water, bandages, and bread—but will show no such kindness to the able-bodied, being suspicious even of lone, crying children (in these lands where dopplegangers and shapeshifting mages aren't unknown).

Intruders so bold as to fight a guard cohort will find horns blown, reinforcements pouring out of the estate in question, and the guards of neighboring estates either sallying forth too, or watching alertly, mustered in arms and ready. Many estates can unleash formidable monsters to attack capable- and dangerous-seeming intruders, and more than one boasts a private chapel (to the deity most revered by the manor "lord") with resident clergy who will also work magic in defense of the peace of Oparl.

BEHOLD, THE BACKLATCH

Folk who manage to stay as guests for a time in Oparl, or even to own and inhabit one of its mansions, will rapidly learn that one grand manor in town is a "shared house," available to all for use in hosting the wilder sort of parties that one may not desire to have at home.

This house stands at a lane-moot not far east of the central square; one of the crossing lanes winds to the easternmost point of the town square. Known as Moonmirror House (or, locally, as "the Moon"), it's a grandly-curving, many-balconied old stone mansion whose front bows out to mirror the curve of the lane into which its two arched gates open (piercing a wall deeply cloaked in ivy and overhung by many large, old gnarled oak trees). A narrow, lush strip of garden separates wall from house, an uneven flagstone path meandering through its damp greenery.

The back of the Moon opens onto a broad flagstone terrace with its own many-lantern-hung pavilion roof. The roof links the house with a man-made lake—in whose still waters the moon is often mirrored on clear nights. The lake is circled by a path linking many benches, bowers, and small "summerhouse" pavilions, and boasts a tiny island crowned by two trees, four bushes, and a miniature "crumbling keep" folly barely larger than the wharf it "guards."

A small blueleaf wood stands beyond the lake, its trees carefully pruned to form a canopy in whose shade one can easily walk among bare treetrunks, and gather unseen by those outside the trees for covert talk or dalliance.

In the Moon are huge high halls encircled by galleries which throw down curving stairs into the mirror-glittering vastnesses below. The galleries also lead to many luxurious bedchambers inhabited by canopied beds larger than many foresters' cottages.

Originally the home of the sorceress Iyrimma (mother of Perendra of Voonlar), Moonmirror was built to reflect its owner's veneration of Selûne, and bequeathed to "those in Oparl who own no homes of their own" upon Iyrimma's death. After several servants slew each other in battles to claim the house, the Oparlan lords and ladies agreed that they would share the place as a common entertainment facility, and on a limited number of days each year rent it to outsiders (usually wealthy merchants' guilds), these rents being shared out evenly among Oparlan servants. So things stand today, leaving Moonmirror House the only Oparlan mansion most strangers can ever expect to see inside.

In Oparl, nothing is as nature left it, and nothing is "forgotten and overgrown" or situated as it is by accident.

The Moon also offers kitchens, huge granaries, and pantries where food is brought to Oparl for purchase by the various homeowners. It even has—in one gloomy cellar—a cluttered "general wares" shop of sorts, where one may go to buy new boots, or a replacement lantern, or a hinge or weathercloak.

This shop is known locally as "the Backlatch" for obscure reasons, and is staffed by a shuffling, irascible dwarf by the name of Hoadle Hurlaxe, a former mercenary who once commanded his own company, "Ready Steel." Now he gives orders to five half-witted but deft, delicate-fingered, utterly loyal, and terrifically strong human warriors. They scavenge everything of value, carefully saving it for a day one of the "Mighty High of Oparl" might need or want it. Most Oparlan homeowners know nothing of Hoadle (he serves their thankful servants), but several of the more eccentric Mighty High regard him as their friend.

So concludes our passing glimpse of Oparl, one of the most beautiful and fascinating hidden gems of the Borderlands.

Part One: The Miracle of Birth

BY SIMON TAYLOR

Over the next few issues I'll be looking at some big themes. In fact, I'll be addressing the biggest themes of all: love, war, death, disease, and religion. I will show that these themes, big as they are, can be used in a variety of ways to enhance your role-playing experience. Whether they are used as the *raison d'être* for your campaign or are only incidental to the plot they all have the power to make exciting storylines. As always in *Bare Bones* you should find the following text liberally sprinkled with ideas. These themes are not presented as straight jacket or in a stuffy how-to-manual style. I want to encourage GMs to use their imagination and their own creativity to flesh out these ideas and adapt them to their own campaigns.

Let's start at the beginning: Birth.

In most people's lives the birth of a child is an earth-shattering event. Anything that can hit you with the emotional impact of a new child is begging for use in your campaign. Myriad ideas present themselves—I present to you just a few of those ideas. Remember that you are opening yourself up to exploring one of the most emotional moments in life—there is nothing to compare to the power of a birth. It is ground that deserves a soft-shoe approach and some sensitivity. As well, anything with this emotional weight grants the ability to explore morally difficult areas with your players. I am a great believer in the power of RPGs to allow all participants to explore morally gray areas and make some tough analyses about the ambiguous areas of life. If you can't do this in a roleplaying session, where can you? Even so, we should not neglect the fun, so let's start with a whimsy example:

RHUBARB AND GRAVY? MMMM...YUMMY!

Pregnant women experience weird cravings for bizarre foodstuffs. Whether it's seemingly inedible combinations or strange desires for items that wouldn't normally even be considered food, mothers-to-be insist on the comestible in question being brought hither forthwith. Now, imagine the pregnant food-cravings of a dragon! The cravings "suffered" would be truly extraordinary. With whatever monstrous craving you imagine the PCs can get involved in a number of ways. They could be hired to obtain the rare foodstuff by a shape-changed dragon spouse. Or perhaps a pregnant good dragon is about to go on a hunting spree to get what she wants—how can the PCs stop her from causing absolute havoc without killing her and her unborn child? The fact that dragons lay eggs or not is moot—the life cycle of the dragon is long enough that such cravings could easily arise. Whilst potentially fun and exciting there is also a serious side to this scenario idea. The PCs should become very quickly aware of the moral ambiguity that attaches itself as soon as you start talking about the "guilt" of an unborn child. Is it fair to kill a creature simply because they could grow up into a ravaging monster? Creative GMs can tweak this

plotline as much as they want and shouldn't feel limited to dragons—any creature of suitable power and reputation could serve the same purpose.

PUSH!

The actual birth itself is a hugely significant moment. Anything that creates a new beginning opens a rift of possible futures. The moment of birth is used as the starting point for countless great stories and there is no reason that GMs shouldn't tap into that tradition. Once the child is born potentials begin to crystallize, and so will any campaign that takes place around a birth. Whether the birth signifies a new heir to a throne, or the emergence of a doom- or destiny-laden figure, the PCs should be present to witness these historical moments. To provide some drama ask yourself the following:

- Does the mother-to-be need some medical assistance that only the PCs can provide?
- Have the PCs been sent to fetch a rare drug that is needed to ensure the child's survival?
- Do the mother and child need protecting from outside influences wishing them harm?
- What are the expectations put on the child once he or she is born?
- Are there any traditions or ceremonies that must be observed due to the mother's, the father's or the child's racial background, political significance, or maybe some astrological or religious occurrences during the birth?

Answering these types of questions can provide the opportunity for drama and will help you provide an excellent roleplaying experience.

You can, once again, play with the moral dilemmas that your PCs, and hence your players, have to deal with. Be aware that these are heavy choices and may not be suitable for some players. Treat the issues sensitively and you will be rewarded with truly moving moments in your roleplaying. For some examples on the moral issues you can address consider the following:

What if there are complications during the birth and someone must make the decision on whether the mother or child survives since birth would kill the mother? Outside pressures might be brought to bear by those wishing to see one or the other survive. The question arises: who has the right, in all honesty, to make those kinds of decisions?

What if the child is believed to be the harbinger of great evil—can the killing of an innocent be justified in the face of a potential, but non-definite, threat? The key to this type of conflict is to not make it a cut-and-dried issue. Suppose the PCs suspect that killing the child is not enough to prevent the threat. They must then find a way to contain the threat. The more you make the PCs realize that there isn't a "correct" decision the more they'll have to think for themselves and the more likely you are going to get a genuine response from the players. This is one of those moments that separate the truly great roleplayers from the pack. To be able to put yourself through that moral test is, in my opinion, what makes the best roleplaying.

In most people's lives the birth of a child is an earth-shattering event. Anything that can hit you with the emotional impact of a new child is begging for use in your campaign.

THE FUTURE

Having looked at some big scary moral issues let's finally address a more light hearted and heart-warming aspect of the topic. There is nothing as beautiful as a newly born child, except, perhaps, a new mother's joy as she looks upon her baby. This warmth of emotion is the key to making successful use of births in your roleplaying scenarios. At the end of a session your final scene should be a mother and her baby. The PCs should see the incipient future cradled in her arms. Nothing gives a sense of hope of the future quite as powerfully as a newborn. Use this symbolism in your roleplaying sessions and you will see a newfound respect from your players for the integrity of your campaign. Not only will they have something to fight for, but they will also have witnessed the potential fragility of that future that they are striving to achieve. Heroic PCs will relish in the possibilities, whilst oppressed PCs from darker campaigns will be given a glimpse of something bright and worthwhile in the otherwise unremitting bleakness of their existence.

I will probably revisit this topic in a future *Bare Bones*. We have only scratched the surface here but for now I intend to move on to the second part of the great triumvirate next issue—marriage. So unless anyone here knows of just cause or impediment to why we should not proceed, see you next issue!

I welcome feedback on any aspect of *Bare Bones* and am particularly keen to hear from anybody who uses any of the ideas presented. You can contact me at simon@jester.i12.com.
Good gaming!

Creature Collection

The buzz about this critter catalog is that it's Third Edition D&D's answer to the *Fiend Folio*. Heck, Clark Peterson, one of the men behind the tome, likes to call it that. But is that a good thing?

My original ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® books, the warhorses of my younger role-playing days, are well worn and well loved. My *Player's Handbook* flips to the spell section at just a casual opening. My *Monster Manual* is thoroughly dog-eared, and the pages of my *Unearthed Arcana* only stay within the book's terrible binding when handled with the greatest of care. My *Fiend Folio*? It's the most pristine of the bunch. Except for some minor shelf ware, it's as good as new.

Something tells me my copy of the *Creature Collection* will suffer the same fate.

The *Creature Collection* has a lot going for it. The quality hardback is loaded with original monsters ready to jump out and surprise your players. Thanks to the support of White Wolf Publishing, Sword & Sorcery was able to beat the Third Edition *Monster Manual* to the store shelves. The polished book is a shining example of what game companies can do with the d20 license. It was put together in record time (scant months), and is a credit to the writers, editors, and artists who worked on the project. It appears as fresh and creatively cared for as a supplement with a whole year's production time.

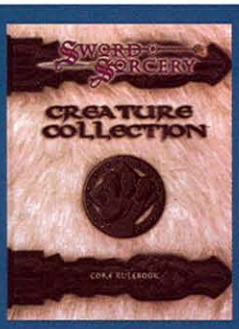
There are some problems with the Challenge Ratings. Some of the monsters don't exactly fit the creature type they tout. But, let's face it, in your home campaign the abstract laws of Wizards of the Coast's design balance is an afterthought, a thing best left for those die-hard geeks who want their creations printed in *Dragon*, *Dungeon*, or *Polyhedron*. Fun, excitement, new monsters—critters of which your players have not memorized every stat and special attack form—that's the fun of a new monster book.

It can also be its undoing.

When I was younger I would frantically flip through my monster books seeking just the right opponent for a Saturday night's game. I would come out from my musings on the *Fiend Folio* with a scrunched forehead and a lack of any really good ideas. The monsters in there were just too strange, and too abstract. They did not sing to my imagination. I walked away from the *Creature Collection* with some of the same feelings. Entries like the Carnival Krew suite of villains (the minions of a strange chaotic evil with the fashion sense of a gaudy French clown), the fatling (fantasy's answer to a TV-addicted shut-in), and the hollow knight (a lawful chevalier fit for a full-length animated feature) just don't inspire me. There are monsters in the book that do. Many of the undead monsters are horrifyingly fun—the innwight (misguided brats who don't know they're dead and just want to cuddle) and the alley reaper (undead murderers waiting for you to take that midnight stroll) are two of my personal favorites. And monsters like the fleshcrawler and the bone lord live up to their horrifying names.

Because the book is sprinkled with creatures already covered in the *Monster Manual*—harpies and halflings, variations on dwarves, and elves—and drips with references to Sword & Sorcery's upcoming *Scarred Lands* setting, the utility of this book for a standard campaign can drop with a page turn.

Like the *Fiend Folio* the *Creature Collection* is a mixed bag. One or two of these monsters may enjoy a lasting memory in the collective consciousness of gamer coolness (githyanki, anyone?), while the majority may just flumph.—*Stephen Radney-MacFarland*



Creature Collection
A 224-page d20 monster collection
By various authors
Published by Sword & Sorcery Studios
$24.95

More new d20 monsters than you can shake a bastard sword at, from variations of the mundane (halfling) to the downright grotesque (fatling). The first offering in Sword & Sorcery's *Scarred Lands* setting, the *Creature Collection* is hit-or-miss, but worth picking up.

Accessibility:	3
Art:	3
Design:	3
Value:	3

Sketch!

Every gaming group has one—that one player who sketches during the game. Their character sheet is so crammed with doodles that you always wonder how he knows he has that dagger in his boot.

Are you one of those players? Do you GM one of those players? Do you want to be one of those players? If you answered yes to any of these, you'll want to check out *Sketch!*

This little gem by Corsair Publishing is a firm fit into the "beer & pretzels" (or, for the underage gamer, Mountain Dew & Doritos) category of roleplaying games. Each player creates a hero or villain on Planet Sketch. *Sketch!* is home to a hodge-podge of folks—from near-future enhanced hackers to black and white movie mad scientists, to sword and sorcery clichés and a host of misfit super heroes—all of whom vie for fame and a moment in the press-conference spotlight. The only limit to your type of character is your imagination and your ability to draw. Other games may claim to be all-encompassing, but I have yet to see GURPS Stickfigure.

Have a character idea yet? Put away those dice, and take out the drawing pencils! As the name of the game implies, you create your character by sketching it. So you can't draw—Planet Sketch can handle the strain of smiley faced crusaders and walking blobs. There's even clip art in the back of the book for artistic wussies.

There are six attributes in *Sketch!:* Speed, Muscle, Power, Gear, Mind, and Toughness. After you're done drawing your character, each of your fellow players assign a number between 1 and 10 to each attribute—the scores they think your character should have. Higher is better. Average your fellow players' tallies and you have your stats.

Afraid your current GM won't go for such a whimsical farce of a role-playing experience? Who needs a GM? *Sketch!* sure doesn't! The basic rules are set-up without a GM in mind. Some of you can play heroes, some villains, and you can pound the snot out of each other without any need for arbitration. If your GM is running late to the game session, scribble away and have a few bouts in the Combat Zone—Planet Sketch's answer to Jerry Springer—an arena where nobody heroes and villains duke it out for their fifteen minutes of fame. By the time your DM shows up, you'll be laughing so hard he'll think you got into his *Knights of the Dinner Table* stash.

Afraid your GM will feel left out of all the fun and games? Don't worry. *Sketch!* isn't anti-GM. The advanced rules section of the main book covers play with a GM and with campaign rules. GM or no, Planet Sketch's eclectic background and populace of media-craving crazed superhero and super villain fans is sturdy enough for hours of fun and giggles.

Are the rules realistic? Will they stand the strain of rules lawyers and realism junkies? No. Not this game. Designers Seth Johnson and Brian Schomburg point out in their "Note to Veteran Gamers" at the very end of *Sketch!* that these rules are tailor-made for the person who has never played a roleplaying game before. This game was written with the intent to draw more people into the hobby. While this game may not be your first choice for intense campaign play, it's perfect to run at game days when a bystander asks: "so, what is a roleplaying game?" More so than any other system on the market today, this game aims at making a first-time rolplaying gamer's experience both fun and memorable. If you run events that are open to the public and want a system that does an excellent job of introducing new folks to the hobby, *Sketch!* is a must buy. At $6.95 for the complete rules, few games on the market are as affordable. — *Stephen Radney-MacFarland*

Sketch!
A 48-page RPG
By Seth Johnson
and Brian Schomburg
Published by Corsair Publishing
$6.95

Doodle your desired character, allow your friends to mock your creation, and then clobber their characters for their impudence. One night stand roleplaying at its finest in this wacky quest for Planet Sketch's media spotlight.

Accessibility:	5
Art:	5
Design:	4
Value:	5

All Flesh Must Be Eaten

With fantasy and science fiction done to death, roleplaying game designers are constantly experimenting with genre blending and niche markets for their games. Eden Studio's *All Flesh Must Be Eaten* is a fine example. Described as "a role-playing game of survival horror," fans of George Romero's *Living Dead* films will find lots to love in this zombie horror game.

AFMBE is a zombie-lover's dream. A good seventy-pages are devoted to creating zombies and zombie holocaust setting variants. The zombie creation rules are generic enough to be valuable in nearly any game system. Imagine the look on a player's face when his paladin, having only recently been bitten by a zombie, begins craving the living brains of his fellows. Or the poor street samurai who watches helplessly as hordes of reanimated corpses shrug off slugs from his mini-gun to surround him.

Creating zombies is fairly simple, and there are a few examples available throughout the text. Zombies are composed of aspects, which are decided on by the Zombie Master (the GM in *AFMBE*'s lexicon) to fit the intended scenario. How tough is the zombie? How fast does it move? Does it have any weak spots? Each aspect has a power level related to it, which can be used to measure how much of a chance your players stand against a horde of the things.

AFMBE offers eleven different zombie-infested settings for players to experience. These include your basic walking dead scenario along with several innovative twists worthy of cult status on their own. One particular favorite proposes that special organic foods, products of our increasingly PC, health-crazed society, are to blame for the walking dead. Each setting contains a general background, customized stats for its zombie denizens, and several plot hooks for the campaign.

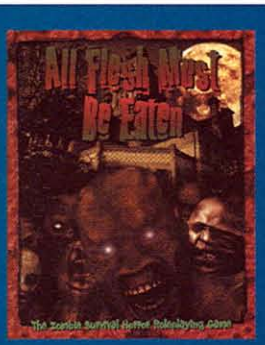
The authors of *AFMBE* have done their homework. The book includes an extensive bibliography of books, comics, and especially movies from which Zombie Masters may seek inspiration. These range from the obvious (*Night of the Living Dead*) to the obscure (*Children Shouldn't Play with Dead Things*) to the foreign (*Le Notti Erotiche dei Morti Viventi*, or *Erotic Nights of the Living Dead*). *AFMBE* could easily serve as a checklist for the zombie-lover's video collection.

So how well does *AFMBE* play? The game includes complete character creation guidelines and everything you'll need to run a campaign. Based on the *Unisystem*, it is fully compatible with its sister product, *Witchcraft*. The game tries to cover a lot of bases, including sketchy guidelines for running card-based and diceless variants.

Characters are skill-based and built around three possible types: Norms, Survivors, and Inspired. A norm is your average Joe. Survivors are jocks, cops, and martial artists—people best equipped to deal with the problem at hand, physically and psychologically. The Inspired are miracle workers: priests, voodoo masters, or psychics, just to name a few. Each type gets a different allotment of points to spend on attributes, skills, advantages and disadvantages. Several pre-made archetypes are available for those who want to jump right into the meat of the game.

Though designed for campaign play, *AFMBE* seems best suited for one-shot adventures. There are only, after all, so many things one can do with zombies. The generic *Unisystem* lacks flavor, but shouldn't hinder the players' immersion in the setting. And it's for the interesting and creative variations on zombified settings that *AFMBE* deserves a spot on every GM's bookshelf.

—*Tom Harrison*



All Flesh Must Be Eaten
A 232-page RPG
By Al Bruno III, CJ Carella, Richard Dakan, Jack Emmert, M. Alexander Jurkat, and George Vasilakos
Published by Eden Studios
$30.00

Fight off brain-eating zombies by taking the role of video store clerks, cops, and cheerleaders in this humorously horrifying modern-day RPG.

Accessibility:	4
Art:	3
Design:	4
Value:	4

NeMoren's Vault

At one time or another, most of us have thrown down a professional gaming product, swearing that we could do a better job. But good ideas rarely add up to sellable, or even publishable, finished products, and at the end of the day, a blustery gamer is often just a blustery gamer.

The new Open Gaming License, which allows publishers other than Wizards of the Coast to publish and sell gaming products using the core of the "d20 System" (the engine that runs DUNGEONS & DRAGONS®), has given many amateurs a shot at the big leagues. Less than five months into the life of the license, we've seen professional d20 products from professional companies like White Wolf, Atlas, and Green Ronin. We've also seen disastrous vanity press-like quasi-efforts from less prestigious companies and a host of Web-only developers.

Among the most promising efforts from the ranks of the small presses is Fiery Dragon Production's *NeMoren's Vault*, by James Bell. In the adventure, a group of heroes gathers to investigate the titular dungeon, per the dying wish of the last of the NeMoren line. Along the way, the PCs encounter a rag-tag band of hobgoblins, some devious traps, and a trio of undead denizens with some disturbing ties to the entombed family.

As dungeon crawls go, this is pretty standard stuff, but Bell manages to pull it off with surprising flourish. Perhaps because this is one of the first d20 adventures to benefit from an actually published version of the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game (most previous efforts were developed from a rules set still in playtesting), the rules are tight. Bell and his developers and editor show a firm grasp of the d20 system, calling for all the right skill checks in all the right places. You'll have to calculate the Encounter Levels yourself, since that information is oddly absent. Handy appendices provide detailed information on monsters and treasure (a sword in the latter section will need some tweaking to bring it into line with the game rules, but this is easily done).

A clear two-page map provides an easy-to-understand layout for the dungeon, which includes both worked passages and natural caverns. The setting and even the creatures encountered break little new ground. Aside from a few very interesting traps and a creative adventure hook, there's not a lot here that will have seasoned gamers dropping their jaws at the impressive innovation. For all its adherence to standard signifiers, however, this is solid adventure design. Those of us who fondly remember the halcyon days of Gygaxian dungeon crawls could do worse than run a group of newbies through this introductory adventure. As the most recent in a long line of dungeon delves, *NeMoren's Vault* might not get the blood pumping. If this is your first foray into the genre, however, you'll likely stick around a while given the quality of the experience.

While the adventure itself sticks closely to a nearly ancient design blueprint, Fiery Dragon Productions has added a new twist with ties to their company's Web site (www.fierydragon.com). Type in the so-called "Runes of Passage" (read: password) to access a private part of the site that offers additional background information, stories and tips from other GMs who have run the adventure, and more.

Despite an amateurish cover (artist Todd Secord provides serviceable to impressive interior art, but Carol Berry's computerized cover colors aren't up to snuff), *NeMoren's Vault* certainly doesn't look like the first product from a previously unknown small publisher. Two pages of full-color handouts and a cardstock page of very well-rendered full-color monster counters rocket the adventure into the well-worth-the-money category, especially since it costs a paltry $9.95.—*Erik Mona*

NeMoren's Vault
A 32-page d20 Adventure
By James Bell
Published by Fiery Dragon Productions
$9.95

A group of adventurers gathers to investigate the tomb of Kragor NeMoren, per the wishes of his recently deceased final descendant. Classic low level dungeon crawling ensues, revealing a surprisingly complex plot involving love, betrayal, and elaborate traps.

Accessibility:	4
Art:	3
Design:	4
Value:	5

The Horror Beneath

Where to begin? Be forewarned. Spoilers abound.

The Horror Beneath, a 32-page d20 adventure from Nightshift Games, is an absolute mess. Ostensibly, it's about reestablishing contact with a now-abandoned mining town beset by the denizens of a recently unearthed cavern system, sealed by dwarves in the ancient days to lock a dire evil from the light of the world. In practice, it's an overly padded, uncreative disaster that's rendered all but unplayable by obtuse design, poor maps, and inscrutable organization.

The insidious "brooders" at the root of the mining town's trouble are virtually identical to H.R. Geiger's Aliens from the self-titled series of science fiction movies. Even if that idea fills you with glee (who would win, Ripley or Regdar?), there are enough problems with *The Horror Beneath* to dissuade even the most ardent Sigourney Weaver fan.

Adventure background takes up just under a third of the adventure. Worse, very little of this information has anything to do with the adventure itself (for the most part an uninspired dungeon crawl), being a summary of the town in which the adventurers are hired.

And from which they immediately leave.

Though this type of information often adds value to an adventure, here all it provides is pedestrian place names (Lionheart, Scarborough, the Welcoming Hearth Inn) and annoying NPCs. Three dwarves who can be hired to accompany the party are named Lari, Mow, and Kurli. No statistics are provided for these NPCs, so even if the idea of eye-poking and *nyuk, nyuk, nyuks* seems up your alley, you're in for a fair amount of design work to get this thing to work.

Designer Eric Metcalf and editor D.B. Lincoln show little grasp of d20 system mechanics, again and again misusing the term "Power Attack" and granting NPCs ranks in both Sense Motive (a real d20 skill) and Detect Lie (an, uh, "imaginary" skill that, if the name is any indicator, is exactly the same as Sense Motive). Combats that are meant to be challenging pack almost no punch given the assumed strength of the adventurers. Once again, to get this to work, you're going to need to crack open those rulebooks.

Once the adventurers make it to the abandoned mining town, they meet the sole remaining family. That night, they're attacked by really, really killable "grub host" zombies. The author suggests that these creatures kidnap two of the family's female children (natch) in order to provide more (sexist) incentive to follow the zombies back to their lair. That leaves us with two problems: Firstly, it's unlikely the players will just let the family children play in the yard while the zombies attack (instead, it's highly likely the PCs will wipe out the zombies with little trouble). Secondly, if the zombies are dead, the only way the PCs can progress to the next part of the adventure, which takes place in an old mine, is to follow the zombies' tracks, something that isn't addressed at all in the adventure. To get your players to the dungeon, you'll need to do some liberal pushing, shoving, and pulling.

Once they get there, they'll find rooms inexplicably in the middle of corridors and NPCs with prepared speeches ready to fly the moment they enter their lair. But most of all, they'll find pit traps. Ten of thirteen keyed encounters in the dungeon are pit traps. That leaves three more rooms, one of which is a stairway. The entire dungeon is explained not in the standard room name/boxed text/description style, but rather in what can only be called stream of consciousness.

The Horror Beneath is easily the worst d20 product to date. Avoid it.—*Erik Mona*

The Horror Beneath
A 32-page d20 Adventure
By Eric Metcalf
Published by Nightshift Games (Team Frog Studios)
$8.95

The second Nightshift effort from Metcalf sends the heroes on a quest to reestablish contact with a mysteriously abandoned mining colony. A nearly incoherent mish mash of rambling text, lame ideas, and shoddy art, the product succeeds only at making its publisher look like a vanity press.

Accessibility:	1
Art:	2
Design:	1
Value:	1

Crawl and Slither

BY ED GIBSON

It's only fitting to start off a column called "Web Wanderings" with a site for spiders, scorpions and other arachnids, www.ufsia.ac.be/ Arachnology/Arachnology.html. Over 1000 sites are accessible from links on this site. The Australian museum offers to "Test Your Fear of Spiders" at www.austmus.gov.au/spider/ac00.htm. I was expecting a number of pictures, but instead found a clickable quiz. You can find a selection of spider web photos at www.unibas.ch/dib/nlu/staff/sz/spidergallery.html. There's also a number of links on spider bites and venom, see http://overton.tamu.edu/news/year1995/merge1 for a warning on watching for nasty critters when bringing in firewood for the winter.

Last issue, we explored the bigger things that go bump in the wilderness (like Bigfoot and the Loch Ness Monster) with the cryptozoology page of www.herper.com. This time, let's take an in-depth look at the rest of the site. The first step is to visit the Arment Biological Press page, at www.herper.com/ebooks/index.html. In a refreshing change of pace from sites which try to sell you books based on their vague resemblance to a topic you're researching, all the books offered here are available for free downloading in PDF (Portable Data Format). As an aside, if you don't have the free Adobe Acrobat PDF reader from Adobe Systems, you should visit www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readermain.html and download the latest version. It's used to distribute RPGA® tournaments and is a common file format on the Internet.

The free books are in the public domain and in many cases were published prior to 1900. There are books on natural creatures, such as snakes, reptiles and alligators as well as more esoteric topics. The Great Sea-Serpent, published in 1892, contains 82 illustrations, and documents 187 reported sightings of Sea Serpents. Un-Natural History was originally published in 1886 and includes treatises written in the 1600's. These papers discuss the existence of such creatures as the basilisk, the unicorn, the phoenix, and the behemoth (elephant). Another section discusses the use of music to cure disease and heal the poisonous bite of the tarantula.

These papers discuss the existence of such creatures as the basilisk, the unicorn, the phoenix, and the behemoth (elephant). Another section discusses the use of music to cure disease and heal the poisonous bite of the tarantula.

A brief review of these books provides a wealth of ideas for *Masque of the Red Death*, *Dark Matter*, *Chill* or *Call of Cthulhu* adventures.

For a more contemporary view of cryptozoology, stop by the Enigma Cryptozoo at www.parascope.com/en/cryptozoo/index.htm. The quirky site features essays and illustrations of dozens of weird creatures, including the fearsome El Chupacabras, the "goatsucker of Latin America." If you live in Loveland, Ohio, you might be familiar with the legend of the Loveland Frog, an enigmatic bipedal batrachian creature sighted there in 1955 and 1972. Chances are this page will be your introduction to this very bullywug-like river dweller, and his history makes for fascinating reading. Those seeking a more credible incredible creature should check out the story of the thylacine, a sort of dog/tiger/wolf/hyena amalgamation that actually existed, and might still exist in remote parts of Tasmania.

Venomous reptiles are a staple of fantasy games. At www.herper.com/Venom.html, information is available on a variety of real life poisonous reptiles. Information on bites, outdated methods of handling snakebites and photographs are available from a variety of links. A listing and pictures of the world's ten most deadly snakes can be found at www.thesnake.org/venom.html. There is an extensive discussion of snake venom at www.thesnake.org/bites.html. The LD50 (the milligrams of venom per kilogram of victim which kills 50% of victims in 24 hours as measured in experiments on mice) is given for a wide variety of snakes. The site provides information on venomous snakes as pets (not recommended), but it gives you an idea of how careful one must be in dealing with these creatures (very useful if a villain decides to use a snake to eliminate a hero). Additional information on handling "hot" (venomous) snakes can be found at www.kingsnake. com/venom101. Don't try this at home, but if you want to see how easy it is to purchase these animals, click on over to Glades Herp, www.gherp.com/gherp/pages/venomstock.htm, where everything from a cobra to a rattlesnake is available for sale.

This column is written to give you ideas to use in your campaigns and get your creative juices flowing. If you run across an interesting site or have a related idea you think might benefit other RPGA members, send it along to Polyhedron@wizards.com.

THE 2001 RPGA NETWORK CLUBS DECATHLON

In 1990, The RPGA Network began sponsoring a competition called the Clubs Decathlon. Over the years, this competition has encouraged members of Network Clubs to show off their creative and roleplaying talents, as well as showcase their dedication to the Network. Although roleplaying in general is a cooperative hobby, there are certain areas in which an individual member can shine. Better yet, there are other areas that require the talents of the entire club working together.

Since 1995, Decathlon rules and event updates have appeared here in the pages of *Polyhedron*™. The Decathlon is a year-long competition, culminating in an awards ceremony held at the Network's annual convention, WINTER FANTASY™. (This year, Jan 25-28, Fort Wayne, IN, USA.)

This year, we have done a lot of soul searching here at Network HQ. We've re-evaluated many of our programs and practices to reflect the changing needs of our members, and to better reflect the hobby of roleplaying. Since its inception, the Decathlon has tried to offer options for just about everything a member could do. Going forward, the ten events comprising this competition will evolve and change to meet the needs of our membership, as dictated by the membership. It is our goal to present the members with the best quality play experience possible. So when your needs change, so do ours.

We have designed this year's competition to be as simple and accessible to the membership as possible.

To enter, a group of members must form a club.

That's it. No really, it is. On January 1, 2001, all Sanctioned RPGA Network clubs will be entered into the Decathlon. All a club need do to participate is play games, at conventions, gamedays, at home, or even on the moon (if you manage to pull this last one off, please invite us to come and play with you).

But to win, a club needs to try a little harder. The ten events ("Decathlon" means a contest consisting of ten different events) that follow include not just gameplay, but writing adventure scenarios, designing fantastic places and activities, and even helping out in the community. Like the Olympic track and field Decathlon, each event focuses on a different kind of club activity. Although some are very similar in focus, each has its own challenge and flavor.

For events that require submissions to Network HQ, submit the entry with a Decathlon entry form and standard disclosure form (both these forms are available on the RPGA website, copies can be mailed out as necessary). If you submit by email, attach the file and note the event you are entering. Submissions must be received by the deadline noted, not postmarked by the deadline.

If entering an event by e-mail, please adhere to the following format:

Email entries to HQ at decathlon@wizards.com. One entry per e-mail, please.

Subject line should read: Decathlon Entry, (name of event).

The main body of your message should contain the following information:

Club name
Name of event
Member(s) participating (with RPGA #'s)
Entry

Each event is worth between 1 and 4 points, and the club with the most points at the end of the year will be declared the victor (maximum 40). Unless stated otherwise in the event description, points will be awarded for first (4), second (3), and third (2) places, with any remaining entrants earning one point for participation.

Please note that club members must participate in all events on behalf of their club. A club member is defined as an RPGA member who is listed in the database as belonging to that club. RPGA members who belong to more than one club can only participate in the Decathlon on behalf of the club in which they are registered in the database. This is because the database automatically tracks many aspects of the competition, and we'd like not to confuse it.

So, without further rambling, we present the following events for the 12th annual Network Clubs Decathlon. Good Luck, and we'll see you at the awards ceremony next year.

EVENT 1: ROUNDS JUDGED

One of the most important functions of the Network is our scenario play program. The first three events in the Decathlon focus on different aspects of gameplay, the first being the Game Master. For the 2001 calendar year, all rounds judged

by members of a Network club will be recorded by our database as they are processed. At the end of the year, the club with the highest ratio of rounds judged to members judging will be the overall winner of the event. The remaining clubs will fall into a grading curve, where the top third of judging ratios will receive 3 points, the middle third 2 points, and the bottom third 1 point for participation.

EVENT 2: ROUNDS PLAYED

At the same time, the database will track the play history of all members of Network clubs. At the end of the year, the club with the highest ratio of 1st place finishes to rounds played will be the overall winner. The remaining clubs will fall into a grading curve, where the top third of play ratios will receive 3 points, the middle third 2 points, and the bottom third 1 point for participation.

EVENT 3: PARTICIPATION IN THE LIVING FORCE™ CAMPAIGN

The year 2001 marks the beginning of our newest campaign, LIVING FORCE™. Set on the exciting stage of the STAR WARS universe, the campaign is the perfect vehicle to record participation in LIVING™ campaigns. From the campaign's inception at WINTER FANTASY, to November 30, 2001, 13 scenarios will unfold our first big story arc. Be a part of this great event, and your club can earn big in the Decathlon. We would like to have members of Sanctioned clubs support the campaign by playing as many of the 13 scenarios as possible during that story arc. The Club that has the highest percentage of members who have played all 13 scenarios will be declared the overall winner.

EVENT 4: CREATE A NEW COMMUNITY

Part of the fun of playing a roleplaying game is interacting with new people and places created by the Game Master. Here's your chance to bring the whole Network into your gaming group by creating a community of people to interact with.

Design a community for your favorite RPG campaign. Detail its history and describe the current state of affairs. Provide information on important NPC's, giving accurate stat blocks where possible. Include some rumors and adventure hooks to involve visiting player characters. Supply a basic map at the very least. The community may be as large or small as you like, but it should be different and interesting.

Entries for this event should be submitted no later than February 28, and must be accompanied by a Standard Disclosure Form. Results will be posted by March 16.

EVENT 5: CREATE A COMPANY OF ADVENTURERS

Everybody likes making characters, but what can you do with them? Here's a chance to show off just how creative you can be. Design a company of six adventurers, their history, and their reasons for adventuring together. Use the new DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS®, rules, making characters between 6th and 9th level. Equip them using the wealth per level guidelines presented in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. Make characters that you would want to play, because you'll be doing just that a little later in the competition.

Entries for this event should be submitted no later than March 31, and must be accompanied by a Standard Disclosure Form. Results will be posted by April 20.

EVENT 6: WRITE A SINGLE ROUND SCENARIO

Having tried your hand at Communities and Characters, why not take the next step and write a whole scenario? Write a single round scenario in any game system we use in the scenario program. The scenario must include six or more well-developed encounters and necessary maps. Player characters are required when applicable. It may be designated for a specific convention.

Submit a disk copy of or email the submission in a format readable by MS Word (we recommend .rtf), a printout of the submission, and the necessary forms. All entries must adhere to the RPGA Standards of Content as published in the *Membership Handbook* and on the website. In lieu of a formal edit, at the very least run it through a spelling and grammar checker. All stat blocks *must* be correct. Entries should not exceed 15,000 words, not including characters. When writing, try to strike a balance between including the necessary information and being wordy.

Entries for this event should be submitted no later than April 30, and must be accompanied by a Standard Disclosure Form. Results will be posted by May 18.

C L U B

EVENT 7: WRITE A MULTI-ROUND SCENARIO

Next, try it twice. Using the guidelines from the single round event, write a multi-round scenario

There should be continuity of plot between the two rounds, but the content is up to you. Apply the requirements of the single round tournament to each round of the submission.

Entries for this event should be submitted no later than June 30, and must be accompanied by a Standard Disclosure Form. Results will be posted by July 20.

EVENT 8: TEAM PLAY

At the Origins International Game Expo and Fair (July 5-8, Columbus Ohio), and at other conventions around the world in July, the fun really begins. Using the characters designed in Event 5, come and play in a very special tournament only available to Network Clubs. The highest scoring team will have their characters permanently added to the scenario. For those clubs that did not submit a company of adventurers in March, a default set of characters will be provided. But only a team that plays characters designed by their club is eligible for first place in this event.

EVENT 9: NEW DECATHLON EVENT

Every year, we ask the members to design a piece of the competition for the next year. Propose a Decathlon event of any kind, in the format shown in this article. It can be as wild as you want, but it must be something a club can do, preferably something that takes more than one person to accomplish. We'll make the best events part of next year's competition.

Entries for this event should be submitted no later than August 31, and must be accompanied by a Standard Disclosure Form. Results will be posted by September 21.

EVENT 10: CLUBS IN THE COMMUNITY

Most of the competition so far has involved clubs competing against each other, but within our own community of role-players. But there is a larger community in the world, a community that occasionally needs a little help. You and your club are encouraged to get out and do something for somebody that is not you. Sponsor or participate in some community activity, and then let us know what you did.

Participation in this event is worth 4 points.

Y2K: THAT'S ALL, FOLKS

Here it is, the final update for the 1999-2000 Clubs Decathlon. As promised, we have some Tournament Play results to share, as well as the results from the second Service event of the year.

TOURNAMENT PLAY/INDIVIDUAL

Tournament results are in from Shorecon, where two of our American East Coast clubs battled it out. The official decathlon event pitted individual players from different clubs against each other. This year's competition featured *Dragon's Deep*, a one-round LIVING CITY™ scenario by Troy Daniels.

Shorecon
(September 28-October 1, Cherry Hill, New Jersey)

Death Warmed Over
(John Elmstedt participating)
1 point

Travelers, Inc.
(Jeffrey Eick participating)
1 point

SERVICE: MOST ROUNDS JUDGED

After an Herculean struggle with our database, we can finally report the results of the second Service event of the year. This year's event measured which clubs judged the largest number of scenarios per member, averaged by club size. All rounds judged between May 1 and August 31 were counted (and nearly swallowed) by our voracious database, with 4 points going to the club that judged the most rounds, 2 points going to the second most frequently judging club, and 1 point going to everyone else who participated. The totals for the seven clubs that participated in the event follow:

Dragons and Wizards Network (DAWN)
4 points (6.92 rounds per member)

Council of Wyrms
2 points (6.28 rounds per member)

OSQUIP
1 point (3.73 rounds per member)

The Seattle Mob
1 point (1.98 rounds per member)

Roleplayers Guild of Kansas City (RPGKC)

1 point (0.75 rounds per member)

Shadow Company Gaming Guild
1 pt (0.00 per member)

Astute readers will note that there are only six clubs listed above. This year, those of us who work at RPGA HQ formed an unofficial club to see how well we stacked up to the competition. We averaged 4.17 rounds per member (thanks, Scott!), earning us one fictional point.

LET'S GO TO THE MAP

With three more service events pending, here are the current Decathlon Standings:

Club	Totals	Count
Naughty Weasels	27	8
PM Players	25	9
DWO	22	9
DOGS	16	8
The Mob	15	6
DAWN	14	7
GAM	10	4
Travelers, Inc.	8	5
Arc Fellowship	7	3
Shadow Company Gaming Guild	6	5
Magma Gamers	6	5
House Rookhaven	6	2
Council of Wyrms	5	4
YSU Gaming Guild	4	4
RPGKC	4	4
OSQUIP	4	4
Threat of Ghouls	4	3
Overkill, Inc.	3	3
ORC Horde	3	3
FORGE	3	2
Waterdeep Boys Club	3	1
S.A.G.A.	2	2
Evansville Gaming Guild	2	2
Clarksville Gamemaster's Guild	2	2
Black Hand Gaming Society	2	2
Silicon Knights	1	1
Shadow Knights	1	1
Phoenix Alliance	1	1
NEOGI	1	1
GEAR	1	1
Fellowship of the Blade	1	1
Capital Area Roleplayers	1	1
Fellowship of the Black Spot	1	1
Company of the House	1	1

THINGS TO COME

There are three Service events yet to resolve, and they are resolving pretty darn quickly.

Most Rounds Judged, Third Period (September 1 through November 30)

Most Tournaments other than LIVING™ Campaigns played by club members (January 1 through November 30)

Most members playing in the LIVING GREYHAWK™ Campaign (August 10 through November 30)

AT A GLANCE: THE NETWORK HQ CHEATERS CLUB

All clubs that manage to clean our clocks will win a super-secret nifty prize that's so cool we can't even tell you what it is, yet. Well, ok, we have no idea what it will be, but we promise it will be sweet. To get it, though, you'll have to match up against these quasi-impressive statistics:

Tournament Play, Individual (Dragon Con)
3 points

Best Legendary Weapon
2 points

One-round Tournament
(Twilight of the Dirty Turtles)
3 points

Multi-round Tournament
(Do Me a Favor)
6 points

Most Rounds Judged, First Period
8 rounds per member, 40 rounds total
2 points

Most rounds Judged, Second Period
4.17 rounds per member, 25 rounds total
1 point

That's 17 points over 6 events, folks. Eat our dust.

C L U B

CLUB LISTING

AUSTRALIA

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

Waramanga
Naughty Weasels
Contact: Jonahtan Naughton
naughtyj@dingoblue.net.au

NEW SOUTH WALES

Rockdale
Scions of Kytheria
Contact: Chris Zantides
Zantides@wizards.com

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Mt. Lawley
The Hall of Heroes and Heroines
Contact: Doug Clutterbuck
Doug_Clutterbuck@bigpond.co

BRAZIL

Osasco
Southern Cross Guild
Contact: Alexandre T Yamao
ayamao@hotmail.com

CHILE

Santiago
Avataria
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CANADA

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Victoria
Ryan and the Rest
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ONTARIO

Barrie
Barbarians
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gregory.lloyd@home.com

Stittsville
Osquip
Contact: Darryl R. Farr
Mithras@achilles.net

Russell
Russell Association of Gamers
Contact: Braden A. Box
sheldonbox@igs.net

QUEBEC
Montreal Adventurer's Club
D.D.O.
Contact: William Sinka
wdja@sympatico.ca

ENGLAND

Abingdon Guild of Advertures
700 PM Thurs
The Net Centre
Stratton Way ABINGDON
Contact: Steve
Tel: 01235 538901
Ages 14+

British Armed Forces
To be put in touch with the clubs on or near your base, contact: Sad
Tel: 01235 538901
sad@ukonline.co.uk

Circle of Realms
2.00–7.00 PM Sun. (All RPGs)
St. Philips Church Hall
102 Nutley Lane
REIGATE, Surrey
Contact: Adrian
Tel: 07957 724248
or 01293 784544
LRP last Sunday of the month

Croxley Roleplayers
7.00 PM–late weekdays (RIFTS, D&D, others)
Croxley, WATFORD, Herts
Contact: Nick
Tel: 0585 021030

DragonForge Roleplay Club
18.30 PM-22.30 PM, Thurs (CCGs, RPGs, etc)
Phoenix Centre, Phoenix Way
Windermere, CUMBRIA
Contact: Leigh Oakley
Tel: 01539 488787
Web:www.dragonforgeclub.com
cost 2 GBP per visit

Dungeons Realms and Galaxies Gamers Association (D.R.A.G.G.A.)
HASTINGS
Contact: Colin Nash
Tel:01424 851 807
or 07719 201 992
cnash@eurobell.co.uk

East Midlands Roleplaying Club
1.30 PM–5.30 PM (CCGs & RPGs)
Queenswalk Community Centre, Housemans Gardens
The Meadows, NOTTINGHAM
Contact: Ian
Tel: 0115 913 2980
Jabburwok@aol.com

The Guild of Melee & Magic Central London div.
5.00 PM–11.00 PM Mon. (RPGs)
Windeyer Café, Windeyer Institute of Medical Science, University College, London
46 Cleveland Street,
LONDON, WI
5.00 PM–11.00 PM Tues.(CCGs)
Medical Students Union, Carroll-Marx Hall, University College, London, 43–49 Huntley Street
LONDON WC1
Contact for both: Jason
Tel: 0181 715 8675
Magic: The Gathering tournaments first Saturday of every month

The Guild of Melee & Magic South London div.
2.00 PM–7.00 PM Sun. (CCGs & RPGs)
The Black Horse & Harrow Public House, 167 Rushey Green
CATFORD SE6
Contact: Jon
Tel: 0181 650 7050

Hinckley Roleplaying Club
6.30 PM Fridays till late
48 Clifton Way, HINCKLEY
Leicestershire LE10 OUZ
Contact: Scott
Tel: 01455 440583
Email: ADandDGM@aol.com

Huntingdon and District Games Club
7.00 PM–11.00 PM Thurs. (all gaming)
HUNTINGDON, Cambs
Contact: Chris
Tel: 01480 812639

King's Lynn Games Club
7.00 PM–11.00 PM Tues. (wargaming)
2.00 PM–6.00 PM Sun. (RPGs & CCGs)
KING'S LYNN, Norfolk
Contact: Steve
Tel: 01553 811433
Real People Gaming
7.30 PM–11.00 PM Tues.
The Grasshopper (over 18's)
Bournemouth Road
Poole, DORSET
Contact: Paul
Tel: 01202 466708

Shadow Warriors
2.00 PM–7.00 PM Sat.
Northfields Community Centre
Northcroft Road
NORTHFIELDS
Contact: Gerald
Tel: 07947 536859

South Wiltshire Adventures in Time
7.00 PM–10.30 PM Sun. (all RPGs)
Morrieson Hall, Brown Street
SALISBURY, Wilts
Contact: Keith
Tel: 01722 711484

Tuesday Knights
7.00 PM–10.00 PM Tues. (RPGs)
King of Diamonds, Chancery Lane
LONDON
Nearest Tube: Chancery Lane
Contact: Dave
tuesdayknights@snail.dircon.co.uk

Wilmslow Games Club
7.00 PM–11.00 PM Sun. (all RPGs)
The Drum and Monkey, Moss Rose
ALDERLEY EDGE, Cheshire
Contact: Steve
Tel: 01625 540329
Email:
sbarcroft@ndirect.co.uk

SCOTLAND

Motherwell Roleplaying Club
6.00 PM–10.00 PM Tues. (all gaming)
Newarthill Community Centre
MOTHERWELL, Scotland
Contact: Steven
70 Campsie Road, Wishaw
Strathclyde ML2 7QG

Hamilton Roleplaying Club
7.00 PM–late Mondays (D&D)

L I N E

10 Birdsfield Street, Burnbank
HAMILTON ML3 0RD
Contact: Richard
Tel: 01698 823168

UNITED STATES

MULTI-STATE CLUBS

ARC Fellowship
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oghmyte@bellsouth.net

PM Players
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richard.bingle@disney.com

ALABAMA

Madison
Gamer Central
Contact: Jason Milks
jmilks@swpolymers.com

Montgomery
Visions Vanguard
Contact: Christopher R. Camp
kip@visionsgames.com

ALASKA

Anchorage
Shadow Knights
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will@brightsolutions.com

ARIZONA

Chandler
Shield of Almor
Contact: Craig Hier
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Flagstaff
Knights of the Potato
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Tucson
The Desert Rogues
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ARKANSAS

Benton
Little Rock Gamers Guild
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Greenwood
T.O.A.D.S.
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dwilly2@earthlink.net

West Memphis
FORGE
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CALIFORNIA

Chico
Chico Gaming Guild
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Pleasanton
RPG'ers Society
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Reddragon@home.com

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The Other Guys
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San Diego
WARLords
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warlordsca@aol.com

San Jose
Clan Haleth
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Bay Area Roleplaying Society
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Shafter
Rogues of the Garage
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Santa Ana
Greater LA RPGA Council
Contact: Dennis Holmdahl
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COLORADO

Aurora
House of Dragons
Contact: Gregg Belcher
waff1@juno.com

Colorado Springs
Goblins Reach Adventure Guild
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edward.williams@mciworld.com

Steele Justice
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Waterdeep Boys Club
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Chrome Angels
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Universe Construction Company
Contact: Jay Fisher
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Overkill, Inc.
Contact: Wayne R. Rosser
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Central Florida Guild
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Miami
The Inner Circle
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Dragons & Wizards Network
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Florida Roleplayers Association
Contact: Matthew B. Capstraw, Esq.
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Tampa
Tampa Area Gamers
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TORP
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GEORGIA

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HAWAII

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IDAHO

Idaho Falls
The Ignoramuses
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Star
With Any Luck Klub
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ILLINOIS

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Wyrmhole Gaming Club
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Carpentersville
Alternatives
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DeKalb
DeKalb Gaming Guild
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Carpe Aurum
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INDIANA

Dyer
The Faded Knights
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C L U B

Fishers
Crossroads Gaming League
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The Tri State League
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The Crystal Talon
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IOWA

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Dragon Wing Roleplaying Society
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Fellowship of the Blade
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Masters of the Shadow Worlds
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Fallen Angels
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What Plan?
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GML
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L I N E

Woodbridge
Bloody Broken Foot Clan
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Knights of the Empire
Contact: Linda Baldwin

Kent
Gods of War
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Levittown
Long Island Natives
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Wayland
Waylanders Recon and Rec. Firm
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OHIO
Cleveland
RC Gamers
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Ravenna
The Greyhawk Gang
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Tipp City
Alliance of the 13th Circle
Contact: Jeff W. Byrd
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Westerville
Just Add Dice
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OKLAHOMA
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Contact: Michael Kirk
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OREGON
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Clan of the Cave-Nerds
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Twin Rivers Gaming Guild
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The Missed
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Hollidaysburg
Gatehouse Gamers Guild
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Pine Grove
Lost Merchants Guild
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Pittsburgh
Shielded Dragon
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TENNESSEE
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Threat of Ghouls
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Clarksville
GameMasters Guild Clarksville
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Louisville
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TEXAS
Arlington
Knights of the Square table
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zill@airmail.net

Austin
River City Roleplayers
Contact: Clayton F. Hinton
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Houston
ARGH!
Contact: Dallas S. Sagui
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ORB
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VIRGINIA
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Magma Gamers
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WASHINGTON
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Kennewick
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Round the World

2000 GEN CON GAME FAIR (US)

Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA
August 10–13

Last issue, we gave you the "official" GEN CON® Game Fair report. Member Lisa Chippendale sent us the following, which gives a slightly different perspective on the show of shows. Enjoy. (—Ed.)

GEN CON.

The Mecca of Roleplaying events.

I'd dreamed of attending since I was 10 years old, when I spotted the GEN CON ads in the back of my newly minted First Edition DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® rulebooks. Finally, nearly two decades later, I was going. On Wednesday night, August 9, my plane gently touched down on the Milwaukee airport runway. I soon gathered my luggage and zipped off to the convention center to pick up my pre-registration materials, then spent the evening perusing them while sipping champagne and relaxing on my hotel room's king-size bed.

Okay, I confess it wasn't anything like that. The truth is, my plane arrived too late for me to have any hope of hitting the convention center before pre-registration pick-up closed at 10:00 PM, and I was battling a nasty cold. The next morning also began inauspiciously. Arriving at the convention center, dazed because it was 7:00 AM and my stuffed head felt like it had been inflated with a bicycle pump, I joined a huge throng of impatient gamers standing outside. So much for pre-registration opening at 6:30 AM.

That was **GEN CON Snafu #1**. Luckily, it didn't prevent me from reaching my 8:00 game with plenty of time to spare to wolf down my highly nutritious breakfast of a greasy muffin and some orange juice. I found myself disappointed by the aging basketball arena that housed the RPGA events. Lacking decoration, the arena floor was simply filled with cattle pens made from red and gray curtains, which did nothing to block the din of hundreds of gamers. I had expected the famous GEN CON fair to have more bells and whistles.

I packed three RPGA Second Edition D&D® events into the first day. They were reasonably fun, but nothing spectacular. With my nose worn down to a nub with repeated applications of tissues and fatigue setting in, I was thinking that I would probably rather be home in bed. Thursday night's **GEN CON Snafu #2** didn't help my attitude: computer and staffing problems forced me to spend an hour in a 10-person line to change an event. Plus, I was kicking myself for failing to notice until the last minute of my third event that my sylph character could turn invisible at will. Oops! That mistake led me to **GEN CON Lesson #1: Read your character sheet carefully!**

Friday turned GEN CON around for me. In the morning, after my stuffed nose caused me to fail my breathing proficiency for much of the night, I was sorely tempted to go back to sleep and bag trying to get into the D&D Feature, *Barbarian Lives*, with generic tickets. I'm so glad I didn't. I got in with no trouble, then had a terrific round run by a great DM with a fantastic adventure featuring entertaining characters played by excellent players. (Did I cover all the superlatives, there?)

That round improved my mood immensely. Soon it was time for the Team event and **GEN CON Lesson #2: Make sure the team decides ahead of time whether you plan to play for fun or advancement.** My friends and I did have some fun, but we failed to get within spitting distance of the middle of the adventure, let alone the end. Needless to say, we didn't advance.

After the team round, I made my first visit to the convention building and the dealers' area. It didn't take me long to realize that the heart of the con—and its bells and whistles—is there, not in the drab RPGA Arena. The collectible card ballroom was packed, and meeting room after meeting room was filled with groups of enthusiastic gamers rolling dice, gesturing, laughing. . . and sometimes arguing. People in simple to freakishly ornate or shocking costumes were roaming everywhere, making me feel smugly normal.

The dealers' area was as enticing to me and my fellow gamers as a carnival to a gaggle of seven-year-olds. The flagrantly huge Wizards of the Coast castle dominated the room, although other companies also sported eye-catching displays. I scored some freebies within five minutes, then happily wandered up and down the aisles. I didn't have time to get into any demos, but it was fun just seeing so many booths specifically catering to the needs, whims,

Among the bells and whistles in the dealers' room: The infamous D&D Dungeon Delve.

and desires of gamers, who normally feel lucky just to find one halfway decent comic book/roleplaying game/card store within a half-hour drive of their house.

Soon I headed back to the Arena for my next game. I was less bothered by the building's bland appearance now that I understood that the RPGA events were just a small piece of the whole convention. My final game of the day was great fun, and I discovered that I was feeling much better, despite little sleep and even less vitamins and minerals in my diet. I soon deduced **GEN CON Lesson #3: Fun roleplaying rounds can cure the common cold.**

Saturday morning was marred by **GEN CON Snafu #3**. Although I'd advanced to the second round of the Feature per the official lists, I wasn't on the marshal's list of folks to send out to the tables. Luckily, my wild-eyed, breathless panic at RPGA headquarters received immediate attention, and I returned triumphantly to the marshals with a note that earned me a spot. I didn't enjoy round two of the Feature as much as round one, but I was pleased and flattered when I discovered I'd advanced to round three.

At 9:00 PM, after a frustrating 5:00 round, it was time for round three of the Feature. It would be my fourth round of gaming for the day (OOF!). As I read my character sheet, I knew we were in for some serious fun. We had dark, mysterious pasts and love affairs galore, and the round would begin with a tragic death. Discovery of the body sparked a bout of astonishing roleplaying at our table, featuring anguished bellowing, impassioned speeches, and barely repressed rage of the sort usually found only on daytime TV or *Melrose Place*. We cracked ourselves up from time to time, of course, but in general I felt like I'd stumbled into some incredible improv theater. The fun would continue throughout the round, which included a barbarian council of justice that sounded like a cross between *Conan the Barbarian* and *L.A. Law*.

That round was the most incredible roleplaying experience I'd ever had. When it ended at 1:00 AM, I was so pumped that I was practically bouncing off the concrete floor. That experience opened my eyes to what a group of good roleplayers can do with an entertaining storyline and well-crafted characters, and it left me more excited about the game of D&D than I had been since I was a kid discovering it for the first time. I realized that, when played at this level of intensity and commitment, D&D ceases to be a game and becomes a framework for the imagination, a vehicle that a skilled group can use to build an incredible story.

I also figured out **GEN CON Lesson #4: Playing with complete strangers is great for your roleplaying.** With friends, you fall into established patterns of behavior, and you may be inhibited because you worry about what they think. But with strangers, you're more free to experiment, to try emotionally connecting with the character you're playing. So what if this leaves you wide open for ridicule—you don't have to see these people again.

The next morning, after four hours of sleep, I actually managed to get up, check out of my hotel, and get to my LIVING GREYHAWK™ game. That round turned out to be like dessert after a wonderful meal at your favorite restaurant. I had another great time with a table full of good players, and I loved playing my annoyingly lawful cleric of St. Cuthbert.

After wandering the art show and the dealers' area, attending the RPGA awards ceremony, and hunting down some food, my friends and I headed for the airport. My plane, loaded with scores of exhausted convention attendees and numerous Third Edition *Player's Handbooks*,

actually took off more or less on time, and I sat back to do some serious planning: figuring out how to save up enough money to come back next year!

—Lisa A. Chippendale

Raise your hand if you're looking for a druid. Mustering at Camp Con.

CAMP CON II: OUT IN THE WOODS

Columbus, Ohio, USA
September 15–19

This September, the RPGA descended upon Camp Lazarus, a Boy Scout camp about fifteen miles north of Columbus, Ohio. The setting was typical of a camp—plenty of trees and grass alongside log cabins, dirt paths leading to rough wooden bridges spanning deep gorges. And nearly everywhere you walked you could hear laughing and the rolls of dice on wooden picnic tables.

We had several goals when we came up with the idea for Camp Con. The first was to offer a convention with a unique and low-cost setting. Boy Scout camps like Camp Lazarus have facilities such as cabins and dining halls. We were able to arrange meals and cabin rentals at reasonable group rates. This year we were able to offer a full con package, including room and board, for only fifty dollars. We weren't interested in making money—all we wanted was to break even—which was another convenient way to keep costs low. (The camp also allowed attendees to rough it by pitching a tent on the premises at no charge.)

We chose an outdoor camp not only because it seemed unusual and fun, but because it would provide such a refreshing change from the crowded and noisy conditions found at most conventions that are forced to use one or two large rooms for all their gaming. At Camp Con, each cabin featured a semi-enclosed "gaming room," complete with a table, benches, and screened windows. But the cabins weren't just for gaming. Each featured large restrooms, showers, kitchens, and enough bunk beds to house sixteen people. We tried to spread out campers to avoid hitting capacity, but by the first night it was clear that we had more people than space, which forced us to expand into other parts of the camp.

All adventures were free. Popular scenarios included a Living City High Level event and the Living Greyhawk regional premiere. We also featured a Living City Interactive with a special theme to tie into the wilderness nature of Camp Con itself. The concept was that of a wilderness camp hosting a ranger moot by the sea. Attendees could visit representatives from the Clerical Circle, Animal Shelter, Navy, Proficiency Post, and Land Office. Particularly curious heroes got a chance to embark on a Spirit Quest to discover their spirit animal. We ran almost 100 tables, which is great for a small con. Throughout the convention we offered kids programming in an attempt to offer children the chance to play together, experimenting with arts and crafts and other activities.

Last year, with minimal advertising, Camp Con attracted 80 attendees. This year, 190 gamers joined in the fun. It was tricky dealing with the somewhat surprising increase in attendance, but we learned lessons that will make the next Camp Con even better than this year's highly successful event.

—Mark Middleton

FALLCON

Oxford, England
October 28–29

Someone once told me that what the mind could conceive and believe, man can achieve. And so it was with Fallcon. RPGA member Dennis Douglas has helped run events for the RPGA the length and breath of the UK, but never one on his doorstep and never from scratch. But he was a man with a dream.

In late October, the dream became reality and he turned to his friends and RPGA members to help run what hopefully will become a regular event on the UK roleplaying calendar.

Answering the call of one of their own, the well-oiled RPGA events machine sprung into action with the network running games from Classic play to SARBREENAR: THE LIVING CITY™, plus a cracking *Call of Cthulhu* scenario which sent players screaming into the darkness. In the middle of this stood Dennis with members to his left and members to his right. One could be forgiven that they were attending a spin off of WINTER FANTASY™, as I'm sure Dennis signed everyone up as they entered. Add to this a small number of traders and you have one terrific little con. Well done, Dennis, and well done to the team of RPGA volunteers.

Dennis is already preparing for next year's Fallcon. Volunteers are needed, and you don't have to be a member (though expect to be by the event's end—Dennis doesn't let you go home until you sign on the dotted line).

—IAN RICHARDS

LUCCA COMICS AND GAMES 2000

Lucca, Italy
October 28–November 1

I always enjoy going to Lucca Comics & Games, one of the most famous Italian comics and games exhibitions. Every year, between the end of October and the beginning of November (always including All Saints' Day), tens of thousands of Italians go to this lovely medieval city, situated in the upper part of Italy not far from Florence. It's always fun to see a very nice small city rounded by remarkable walls that date back to the Middle Ages. Although there are similar exhibitions in larger and better-known cities (Expocartoon in Rome comes to mind), Lucca still holds the attendance record. I don't know the reason, but I suppose this is due to the historic motive: the first Lucca Comics exhibition occurred 35 years ago, in 1965. Until 1993, the primary subject of every exposition has always been comics, but from that year on, games (every kind) joined the exposition. Every year I've been to Lucca, I've seen the games pavilion grow larger and larger, providing a greater importance to the ludic side of the exposition.

Major editors and shops rent a stand inside the pavilions, but even beside the bigger shops you can find small stands with creative people who bring new game proposals, self-produced comics by unknown writers and artists, miniature painters, independent tables of every kind of game, and whatever else. Visitors can try out demonstrations of games, since there's also a prize for the best unpublished game, voted by the participants of every demo table. Of course, the most famous games take a big role inside the convention. MAGIC: THE GATHERING® tournaments are played during the convention, tri-dimensional games, and even roleplaying games, despite the lack of free spaces and quietness. Even live roleplaying games have a big part during the convention. Walking through the isles, you can see fighters and wizards, but also more famous not-fantasy heroes and villains, like Darth Vader or Pokémon's Pikachu...

The main roleplaying event was the presentation of the Italian version of the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS *Player's Handbook*, from 25 Edition, Italian publisher for Wizards of the Coast's roleplaying products. About thirty demo sessions of the new edition were played inside the convention, and a lot of copies were sold. Third Edition D&D was awarded the "Best of Show" prize for the best translated game. For board games, the new edition of *Warhammer Fantasy Battle*, *Mage Knight*, and *Disk Wars* were presented with awards.

Other events included the Pokémon Tour (which featured demo tables of the Pokémon trading card game and other related products), the STAR WARS Olympic Games, a MAGIC qualifier for Pro Tour Los Angeles, miniatures painting, best game master, and other similar events.

Special guests for this year's convention included Justin Sweet, a painter for Black Isle Studios (a subsidiary of Interplay [and the cover artist for next month's *LIVING GREYHAWK Journal*—Ed.]). Alan Dean Foster, author of *STAR WARS* and *Alien* novelizations, had an encounter with fans through a Web-cam, talking about the connection between games, literature and comics (he wrote science fiction novels for the series *Commonwealth Humanx*, from which has been created the *GURPS Humanx* roleplaying game accessory).

Like every year, Lucca was a success (more than 40,000 persons attended during the five days of the convention), showed by the enthusiasm of all participants, both visitors and expositors.

So what else can I tell you? Let's see you at Lucca Comics and Games 2001!

—MASSIMO BIANCHINI

READER SURVEY

We're building a better *Polyhedron*. Response to our first completely redesigned issue, #144, has been overwhelmingly positive. We've been pleased to receive Reader Response forms from all over the world. While we appreciate it when members fill in the little check boxes below, it's even more helpful if they take a minute or two to let us know what they thought of the issue. Though we've spent much of the last two months sticking large heated metal pins into assistant editor Stephen Radney-MacFarland's head, we've yet to find success in our plan to grant him psychic omnipotence. We can't read your minds, folks, but we can read your surveys!

Please take a few minutes to review the issue on the chart below, rating each article on a scale from 1 to 5 (one being "sakes alive, I've never read something so vomitous!" and five being "Manservant, another serving, please!"). All responses received on or before March 1st, 2001 will be entered into a drawing to win a free copy of *The Standing Stone*, an all-new DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® adventure.

RPGA # _____ Name _____

	RATING				
ARTICLE	1	2	3	4	5
Network News	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
LIVING CITY™ Conversion Guide	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
LIVING FORCE™ Character Rules	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Monsters from the Members	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Illicit Wages at Blade's Point	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
You Rogue	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Convention Hitchhiking	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Elminster's Everwinking Eye	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Bare Bones	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The Polyhedron Review	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Web Wanderings	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Clubline	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
On the Trail	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS: _____

Mail completed surveys to: Polyhedron Reader Response #145, P.O. Box 707, Renton, WA 98057-0707 USA. FAX: (425)687-8287. EMAIL: Polyhedron@wizards.com.

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It's always difficult to find the perfect place to sort out your loot. We recommend forlorn rooftops, as you're unlikely to attract passersby. As artist Ron Spears shows us, however, rooftops provide charming challenges of their own...

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